BOKO HARAM AND THE WAR ON TERROR

CAROLINE VARIN

PRAEGER SECURITY INTERNATIONAL

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Pour maman
For giving me Africa, and everything else.

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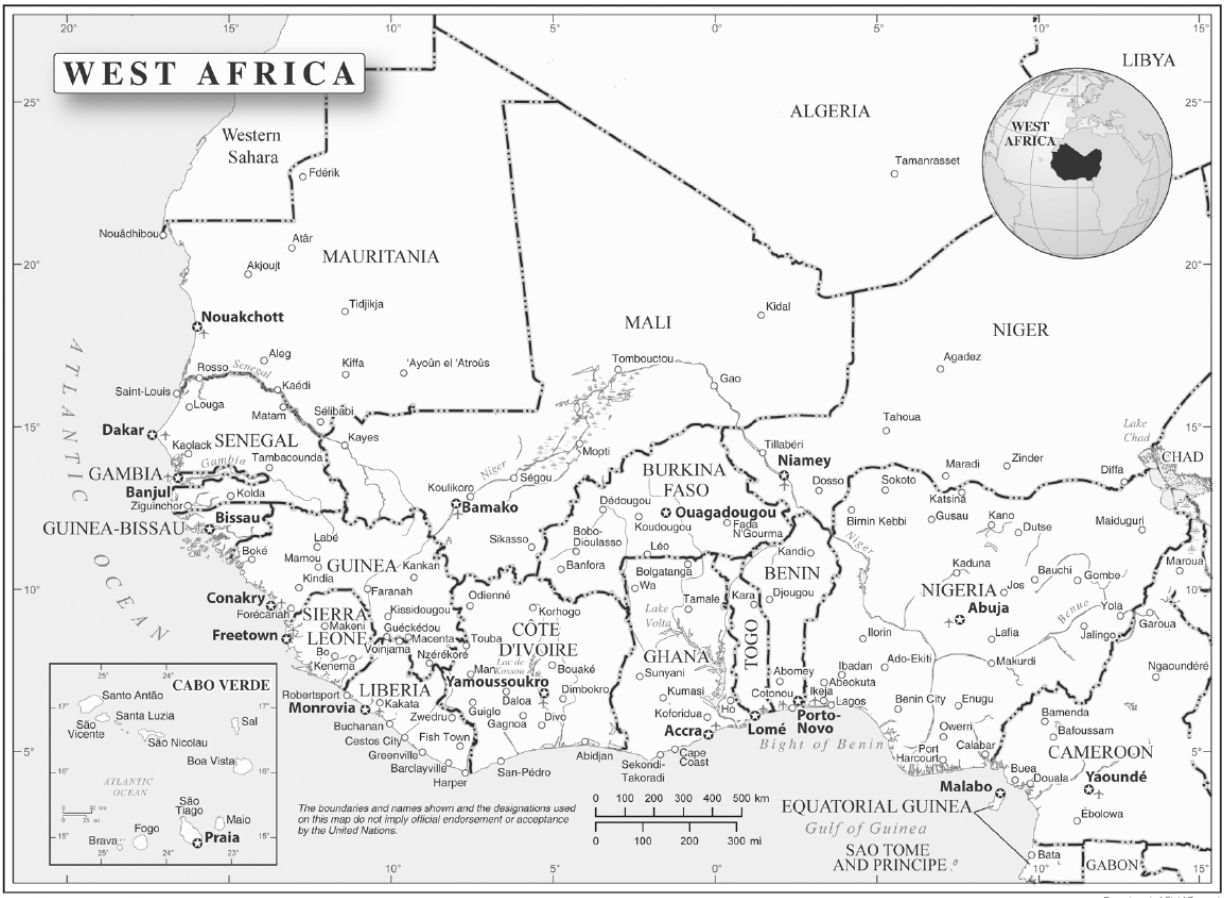

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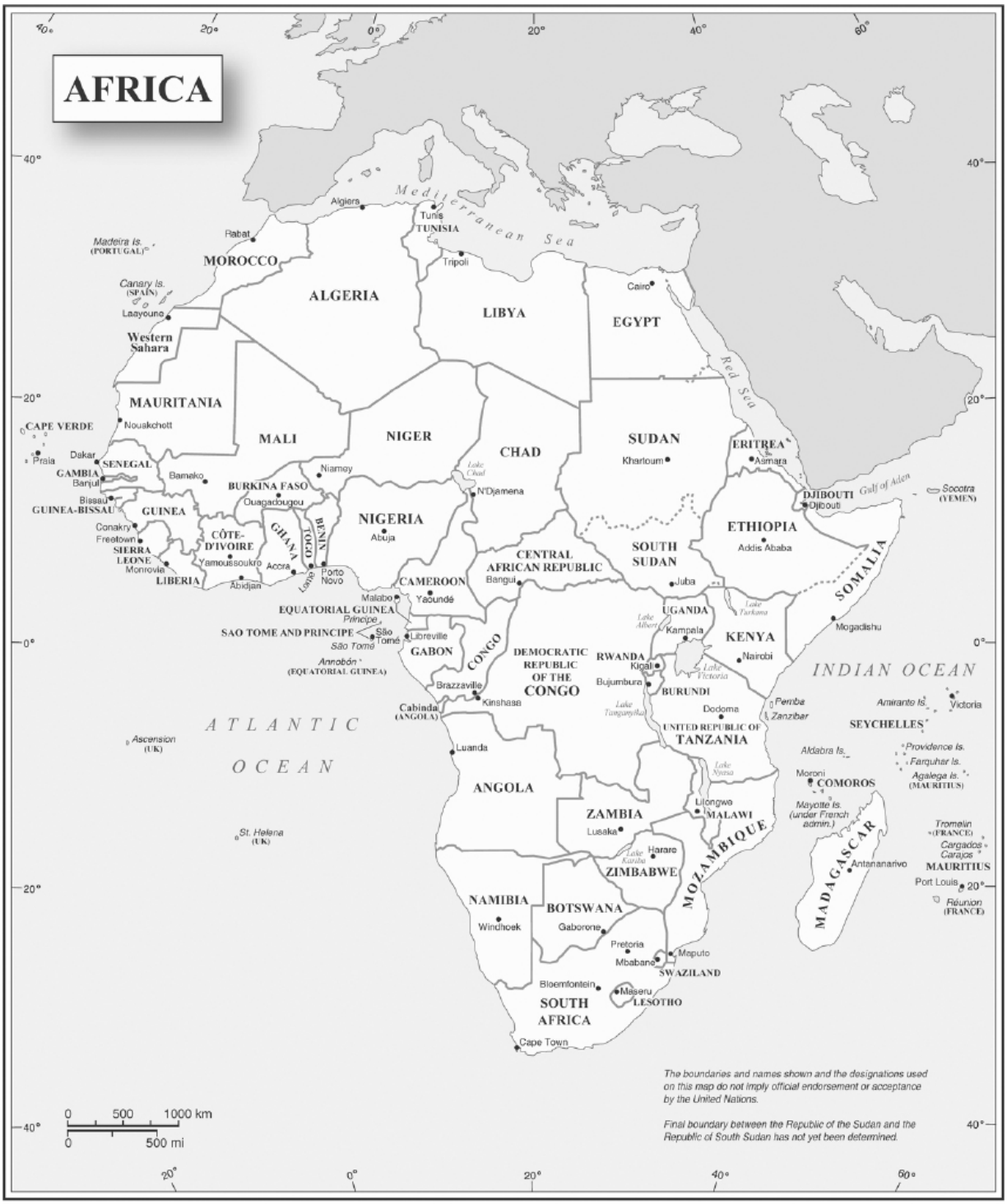

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Introduction

"What is Boko Haram? Do you know who they are or what they want?" asks a senior European bureaucrat. Although the sect has been causing havoc in northern Nigeria since at least 2009, it only caught the attention of the world in 2014 after the kidnapping of 276 girls from Chibok, a town in Borno State, northeast Nigeria. This was not the first mass kidnapping operation led by the insurgents, nor was it the most violent. But it crossed a line and made international headlines.

In the last two years, the literature on Boko Haram has multiplied as academics, journalists, and politicians seek to understand the nature of this violent group. Africa has had more than its fair share of violent actors, ranging from the Lord's Resistance Army's systematic mutilation of women and children—also responsible for the deaths of 100,000 people in Uganda[1]—to the Revolutionary United Front's grisly track record of hacking off the limbs of Sierra Leonians over a period of 11 years. There is a certain "viewer fatigue" when it comes to civilian atrocities on the continent, and yet Boko Haram appears nonetheless to have touched a chord.

WHY DOES THE WORLD SUDDENLY "CARE" ABOUT BOKO HARAM?

I have been following Boko Haram's development since late 2012, when the group, although increasingly violent, was of little interest except to nongovernmental organizations traveling in the northeast or to companies in the area usually concerned with the safety of their personnel. In the last

three years, Boko Haram has developed strategically, militarily, and ideologically under the presumed leadership of Abu Shekau and with the help of sister organizations. Between 2013 and 2014, it also expanded territorially, claiming large swathes of territory in Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa states, northeast Nigeria. Most importantly for our study, Boko Haram has become of strategic interest to the West in its struggle to understand and tackle Islamist extremism. It has taken a relatively long time and much destruction to reach this stage of public consciousness.

Nigeria is a strategic ally in West Africa, a leading trade partner on the continent and a major exporter of oil globally. It has developed enduring political and economic ties with the United States, Europe, China, India, and Brazil. Its internal security is important to its neighbors and its trade partners insofar as it can disrupt the economy. Although Boko Haram has slowed down the local economy of northeast Nigeria—a region that makes up just "6.6 percent of Nigeria's GDP,"[2] this has had little to no impact on the major exports such as oil and cocoa, nor has it deterred multinational corporations from pouring investments into the rest of the country, especially in the south. Boko Haram does not present a serious threat to Western economic interests in Nigeria. Arguably, it is not even an economic threat to Nigeria other than increasing the socioeconomic gap between the country's northern and southern regions.

The long-term stability of Nigeria is of course a concern to its allies, with reports published in the United States suggesting that the country could collapse in the 2015 presidential elections. The insurgency in the northeast during the Jonathan administration lent credence to these hypotheses. The elections, however, defeated all pessimism with Nigeria's first successful and democratic transition of power to an opposition party. Nigeria seems at its most stable today in the hands of President Buhari, who has pledged to make security in the northeast, and therefore defeating Boko Haram, his utmost priority. The alleged fragmentation of Nigeria is no longer a concern to the world.

It would also be misplaced to suggest that the West is particularly preoccupied with the human rights abuses perpetrated by both the insurgents and the security forces. As mentioned above, other nonstate actors on the continent continue to have a disruptive impact on the lives of people in Central African Republic, Eastern Congo, and Somalia, not to mention the recurrent political agitations in Burkina Faso, Burundi, and

Democratic Republic of the Congo that seldom, if ever, make it onto the international political agenda. Although concerns over human rights violations temporarily stalled the sharing of military intelligence and aid from the United States and the United Kingdom, this appears to have been overturned under the leadership of the new president.

The rate and quantity of killings conducted by Boko Haram members could certainly be a mobilizer of public sympathy, with over 20,000 people killed since 2009. On a global scale, out of 32,658 people killed by terrorism in 2014, Boko Haram was responsible for 7,512 deaths, equivalent to 23 percent of all terrorism-related deaths worldwide.[3] This also represents an increase of 300 percent over 2013, suggesting the growing potential of the terrorist group. Boko Haram has recently expanded across Nigeria's borders into Chad and Cameroon where it staged 46 attacks in 2014. In addition, Boko Haram has caused the internal displacement of between 1.6 and 2.2 million people.[4] The number of people killed by the group also exceeds the amount of civilian deaths in any civil war in Africa in 2014: in Central African Republic, 2,116 civilians were killed that year, compared to 1,817 in South Sudan and 4,425 people in Somalia.[5]

Nonetheless, this book suggests that it is not the horrifying success of Boko Haram that has alerted the world to the dangers posed by the group. Rather, it is the Islamist linkages and strange patterns of Islamist radicalization that appear to be spreading globally, which have turned this local insurgency into a perceived worldwide threat. Boko Haram was one of many organizations that joined forces between 2010 and 2013 with transnational terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and Al-Shabaab, giving them a global platform and ideological credibility. In 2015, Boko Haram appeared to change strategies and pledged its allegiance to the West's number one enemy: Islamic State/ISIS. While the kidnapping of the Chibok girls (and others) did raise a social media storm, it had little impact in motivating a coordinated response among political and intelligence organizations. Goodluck Jonathan's pleas for aid and military support appeared to fall on deaf ears, as Boko Haram was perceived as a "Nigerian problem" or even "northern-Nigerian problem." It took a concerted political campaign portraying the group as part of a global network and indeed Boko Haram's own PR maneuvers to include Nigeria in the "war on terror."

IS BOKO HARAM A "NIGERIAN" PHENOMENON?

A second question that this book seeks to address is whether Boko Haram is quintessentially Nigerian, or whether this type of organization could emerge anywhere in the world. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the colonial history of the country, the political dynamics, the economic divides, and the religious rivalries. Indeed, Nigeria's history is peppered with violent nonstate actors and religious fanaticism, with feuds between religious cults and between farmers and herders. The country's crime and kidnapping rates are "critical."[6] But these are not necessarily unique to Nigeria, nor do they explain on their own the success of Boko Haram.

For some, Boko Haram is symptomatic of identity politics and social cleavages that have characterized the country since the colonial era.[7] The guise of Islam really is a reaction to the endemic corruption seemingly encouraged by Western-educated elites and their foreign allies. In addition, the gross inequalities between the north and the south of the country have long been ignored by leaders and have aggravated existing feelings of political alienation.[8] As a result, a social movement is inevitable as the disenfranchised react to a situation of perpetual subjugation. A study by Freedom Onuoha on youth radicalization appears to confirm this notion as "poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and weak family structures" are found to be the greatest factors for Boko Haram's successful recruitment strategy.[9]

On the other hand, the overly aggressive reaction of the state's security forces may have exacerbated the situation. Well-earned or not, the Nigerian police has a reputation for being overzealous with political and social unrest, as evidenced in its handling of the Maitatsine riots in the 1980s. Reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch provide details of extrajudicial killings and torture perpetrated by both the armed forces and the police. According to one security consultant in Nigeria, Boko Haram has principally launched revenge attacks against all those it considers enemies. After the police raid on Boko Haram's headquarters in 2009 and the murder of its leader Mohammed Yusuf, the Nigerian police became the primary target: until 2013, 90 percent of Boko Haram's attacks were aimed at police stations and the armed forces in northeast Nigeria. This lends credence to the suggestion that the persistent existence of Boko Haram is the result of the state's aggressive mismanagement of the insurgency. Onuoha's report, however, finds that "alleged excesses of

security forces are among the least important driving forces of youth extremism and violence,"[10] which of course doesn't entirely discount it as a factor of radicalization.

For a long time, Boko Haram was portrayed as a problem from northeast Nigeria, funded and propped up by local politicians who held a personal grudge against President Goodluck Jonathan. This narrative dominated the Nigerian press for a long time, until Jonathan began to appeal for foreign support to counter the "terrorist threat." The current regional impact of Boko Haram is undeniable, but its international reach is certainly questionable. The way in which Boko Haram is portrayed—as a local insurgency, a terrorist group, a sociopolitical movement, and so on—can influence the way it is addressed but also gives it credibility to further its own agenda and pursue alliances with like-minded organizations at home or abroad. To a large extent this has shaped the evolution of the group, regardless of whether it started off as a "Nigerian" phenomenon.

IS IT ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM?

The "West" and its allies are in the grips of a sort of collective panic with regard to "Islamic fundamentalism" (often used interchangeably with "Islamist" or "radical Islamism"). While this may increase the sales of Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*, the concept of fundamentalism is not unique to Islam by any means. The notion of "fundamentalist" comes mainly from Christian reformist movements and denotes a return to the script and away from established institutions via political and sometimes guerilla methods.[11] Contemporary Islamic fundamentalism, according to Youssef M. Choueiri, "combines political action with an ardent desire to discover the original blueprint of a pious community and its ideological principles."[12] In fact, today, the term "fundamentalist," especially when relating to Islam, is often fused with "fanatic" as both include a certain degree of activism that remains hostile to the established system.[13] It is this reaction to the set international order that is of particular concern to the West.

Furthermore, the post-9/11 world seems to be marked by a trend of Islamist fanaticism that appears different from other fanatical religious cults. Under the leadership of Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda made the United

States and its allies the main enemy of "Islam." It has subsequently mobilized a growing number of men and women "who grew up under largely secular and nationalist systems of government"[14] and are ready to even commit suicide to destroy the West. This modern ideology combines a global political Islam with the practice of jihad. As a result, Islamist movements draw on both nationalist fervors and warrior philosophies to create a new type of combatant, the jihadi, ready to commit the ultimate sacrifice for a political objective with the promise of eternal salvation.

In an increasingly secular society, this apparent religious fervor can seem incomprehensive and irrational. On the other hand, when taking into consideration growing inequalities and the frustration felt by so many people vis-à-vis a perceived "dead-end" existence, it is easier to understand the mobilizing appeal of groups such as Al Qaeda and Boko Haram. The religious framework offers an excellent vehicle that justifies personal and societal sacrifices and promises hope for a better future. This is not unlike the crusades between the 11th and the 15th centuries when men from the most disparate backgrounds crossed Europe to fight in the Holy Land—and terrorize entire populations on the way.

This book also shows that the growing phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism or radicalism is a product of modernity, in particular of the unprecedented local and global inequalities that characterize today's societies. The fear of Islam itself is unfounded: this is a religion that has existed for nearly 1,500 years and has not proven to be more volatile or aggressive than any of the other Abrahamic religions. The mobilizing force of Islam—like any religion with a mass following—is a powerful tool and one that has recently been used by opportunistic leaders to spread fear and violence. But without the real and perceived socioeconomic frustrations experienced by its followers, said leaders would not have the influence that they presently enjoy.

Addressing the problem of inequality, however, is much harder to defend, politically and financially, than for example launching a war on terror against a nonstate actor. Politicians worldwide have refused to face the real issues of growing disillusionment and disenfranchisement of their own populations, let alone those in countries half the globe away. *Boko Haram and the War on Terror* shines a light on Nigeria's past and current problems. It shows that political divides, social inequalities, and the lack of economic opportunity created a "perfect storm," allowing for preachers such as

Mohamed Yusuf and Abu Shekau to succeed in the northeast. Nigeria serves as a warning to the rest of the world: ignore your society's grievances, and you're opening the door to terrorist groups. In this way, Nigeria is not unique.

APPROACH AND LIMITATIONS

This book is not by any means the first on the subject; Virginia Comolli has without a doubt set the tone for future publications on Boko Haram. On the other hand, as I penned these words a year after her, President Buhari declared that the militants were "technically defeated" and no longer able to mount conventional attacks. While many observers view this statement with skepticism, I believe him. Boko Haram has not disappeared, but it has been relegated to the typical African rebel group, limited to a small stronghold, still hurting those nearby but no longer a threat to the nation or of any concern to the West. The year 2015 was instrumental in pushing back the group, and many may wonder why it took so long to accomplish. Was it a lack of political will? Of military expertise? Of foreign assistance? Or does it simply take time to mount a successful counterinsurgency, as one of my colleagues from King's College London astutely suggested.

There are always limitations when writing a book on a violent nonstate actor. Immersion into the group is impossible, and gaining access to its recruits was much harder than speaking to its victims. Most of the observations I make on Boko Haram have evolved through experience, watching the insurgency from afar and dissecting every word written by the many excellent Nigerian and international analysts. In 2015, I traveled to Nigeria to test some of my assumptions and was pleasantly surprised. The people I met in Abuja were open and friendly, eager to share their views and experiences. I spoke with security practitioners and legal experts who had dealt with the organization. Dr. Fatima Akilu, former head of the national security agency's deradicalization program, was kind enough to share her research and strategy on the rehabilitation of imprisoned Boko Haram suspects.

Most useful for this book, however, was realizing the level of disinformation and propaganda that was perverting the crisis. Ordinary (or should I say extraordinary) Nigerians who have individually mobilized to help refugees and victims expressed their anger at the lack of government

response. By "passing the buck" and pointing the finger at his political opponents, former president Jonathan failed to address the growing threat of Boko Haram, allowing the organization to blossom. His incompetence was further exacerbated by his manipulation of local media that was complicit in its obliviousness to the problems of the northeast. This has of course obscured previous research efforts on the subject, and I am indebted to each person who took time to speak with me and clarify the situation.

SYNOPSIS

An encyclopedia couldn't cover half the complexities of Nigeria's history and society, and this book certainly does not begin to tackle this thankless task. Rather I have tried to focus on some of the issues that are most pertinent to the crisis. *Boko Haram and the War on Terror* analyzes this chameleon-like group from its early days as a local cult to its emergence on the international stage as a credible terrorist organization.

Chapter 1 is a condensed history of Nigeria, setting the scene for the development of Boko Haram and focusing on the socioeconomic and political divides between the north and the south of the country. It highlights the inequalities that emerged from as early as the rule of the British Empire and outlines the religious and ethnic differences that have contributed to the regular clashes between the regions. The chapter also delves into the history of military rule and analyzes its lasting impact on the political distribution of power in Nigeria—where the recently democratically elected president was for a short while a military dictator. "The Great Divide" introduces the reader to a country that is unfamiliar to many, and helps contextualize the environment in which Boko Haram was able to prosper.

Nigeria is a deeply religious country where Christianity, Islam, and other cults have thrived. For many, "religion is big business" with plenty of money to be made from preaching and selling paraphernalia.[15] Chapter 2 explores the role of religion in the country with a particular focus on the dynamics of political Islam. It includes an analysis of the Maitatsine movement, which challenged the state of Kano in the 1970s and early 1980s, and assesses the government's response. The competition between the secular state and religious groups is also highlighted in the debates over the constitution and the implementation of sharia law in the north following

Olusegun Obasanjo's presidential election. The particular religious and political dynamics may be unique to Nigeria, and this chapter queries whether this has helped create opportunities for violent and extremist groups to thrive across the country.

Chapter 3 gives an in-depth overview of the "making of" Boko Haram and its evolution into a major insurgency and terrorist group with international ties, before being cut back by the armed forces in 2015. In Chapter 4, we explore the "flight of" Boko Haram, including its radicalization strategy and the government's response to the threat.

Taking a step back away from Nigeria's internal political problems, Chapter 5 looks at the country's relations with its neighbors: Chad, Cameroon, Benin, and Niger. With the expansion of Boko Haram across the borders, an effective counterinsurgency effort requires the collaboration of regional powers. The five countries, however, have been reluctant to commit financially and politically to fighting this common enemy, in part due to historical disputes, power struggles, and foreign interference. Until the creation of a working multinational joint task force in 2015, Boko Haram was able to take advantage of the security vacuum along the borders with Cameroon and Chad and grow into a regional threat.

Finally, Chapter 6 addresses Boko Haram's position in the global "war on terror" and its aspirations to fit into the Islamist terrorist network. It shows that the success of groups such as AQIM and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa in Mali in 2012 helped develop the strategy and network of Islamist groups in Africa. The territorial occupation of northern Mali by terrorists created a unique opportunity to assemble leaders from Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and Al Qaeda. For nearly a year, militants were free to train, exchange ideas, and share aspirations. The porous borders across North Africa and the improvement in wireless communication have allowed this jihadi networking to continue. As a result, Boko Haram has enjoyed plenty of support from its allies, including the Islamic State/ISIS that helped the Nigerian group significantly improve its marketing and operational strategy between 2014 and 2015.

The concluding chapter explains that the successful rise of terrorist groups, in Nigeria particularly but not exclusively, is often the result of failed policies and the growing trend of inequality that disenfranchises entire populations. Not only can governments make an effort to improve social policies, but also they can learn to react quickly when faced with the

establishment of a violent group such as Boko Haram. A global war on terror and hysteria over so-called Islamic fundamentalism do not address the root of the problem. While international and regional cooperation are crucial to arrest the rise of terrorist groups, a timely, continuous, and wholesome effort is necessary to improve security worldwide. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to happen.

CHAPTER 1

The Great Divide

Decades of extremely poor living standards, a lack of economic opportunities, huge disparities between regions, and the apparent corruption and disinterest of the Nigerian government offered perfect conditions in which Boko Haram could prosper. Many terrorist and rebel groups have indeed emerged from countries with a poor track record for human rights, governance, and commitment to the welfare of their people. Muhammad Ali, Mohammed Yusuf, and Abu Shekau have all used the government's perceived corruption and illegitimacy as a rallying cry to recruit members to Boko Haram. It is important to note that their ideology is not exclusively antigovernment; Boko Haram is an ultra-Salafist group with a hyper-conservative reform philosophy opposed to the establishment and innovation in general.

Nigeria's diversity is both remarkable and challenging. It hosts more than 150 million people and 250 ethnic groups. The asymmetric process of integration developed by the British in the colonial era, however, emphasized the differences within the regions and laid down the foundations upon which modern Nigeria was built. Since gaining independence in 1960, the country has been divided regionally, ethnically, and religiously. Christians in the south fear political domination from the more populated Muslim north, whereas ethnic minorities inside the individual states are at risk of being subdued by the three largest ethnic groups: the Yoruba in the southwest, the Igbo in the southeast, and the Hausa-Fulani in the north. Competition over power and access to

government funds has exacerbated the situation, with political contenders capitalizing on existing fears. Boko Haram's grievances are rooted in the economic disparities and political tensions that characterize these two regions.

INEQUALITY IN NUMBERS

Despite rising national income and an average GDP growth of 5.4 percent in 2013,[1] development in Nigeria has been asymmetric and concentrated overwhelmingly in the south. Overall, the living standards in the country have dropped to levels unseen since Nigeria's independence in 1960, while the poverty rate has continued to increase in the last decade. The renowned author Chinua Achebe pointed out that the gap between minimum and maximum pay in Nigeria was among the highest in the world.[2] A 2013 survey by the National Population Commission with the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development revealed the inequalities between the regions.[3]

While 61 percent of the population fall under the poverty line, that burden is disproportionally felt by Sokoto State, whose poverty rate amounts to 86.4 percent. The disparities in the north and south are further evidenced in the health and education surveys: Nigeria has an under-five mortality rate approximating 157 deaths per 1,000 live births. While this number is already very high, in the northeast the mortality rate rises to 222 deaths per 1,000 births but drops to 89 deaths in the southwest of the country.[4] The campaign for immunization of children has also had unequal results, with 25 percent of children under two years vaccinated, but only 10 percent in the northwest and as few as 1 percent in Sokoto.

Unequal access to education is a further illustration of the vast differences between the regions. Literacy rates in the north barely reach 26 percent for women, with a low of 10 percent for those in Sokoto against a national average of 53 percent. In Borno, the heart of Boko Haram's insurgency, the literacy rate is 15 percent while in Lagos in the south, 92 percent of residents are fully literate.[5] An estimated 7–9 million children nationally are out of school of which nearly half are from a nomadic background and have limited access to education. These trends are subsequently reflected in the level of youth unemployment that reached 54

percent among under 35 years in 2012,[6] and again the north shows the highest level of unemployment in the country.

The disparities between the north and the south are quantified by the Gini index, which rates Nigeria among the most unequal 35 countries in the world with a coefficient of 48.8 (with 0 being closest to perfect equality).[7] The Gini index, which measures the distribution of income within countries, shows that inequality in Nigeria has increased over the last 20 years. Indeed, the poorest half of the population receives less than 10 percent of national income.[8]

Inequality in Nigeria is deeply rooted and multilayered. The rest of this chapter will assess how colonialism contributed to regional inequality. It will analyze the role of religion in exacerbating sociocultural divergences and examine the political tools that both the military and civilian government have set up, or failed to set up, to mitigate the effects of the north–south divide.

PRECOLONIAL STATES

The religious divide between the north and the south of Nigeria originated in the precolonial period. In particular, a variety of religious and cultural influences shaped the states of modern Nigeria. Exposure to different Abrahamic religions in the north and south also consolidated political alliances, which led to the rise and fall of empires.

From the 11th century, Islam spread across northern Nigeria, primarily through the travels of scholars and merchants from the kingdoms of Mali and Songhay in western Sudan. These travelers settled in the region and shared their religious beliefs with the Hausa and Kanuri people. Kano especially hosted a large number of Islamic scholars in the 15th century and attracted Arab and Berber traders as well as Hausa pilgrims who were passing through the city. By the 17th century, Islam was established as the primary religion among the elite in northern Nigeria, well before Christians came across the region. The adoption of Islam by local rulers expanded trading and political alliances across northeast Africa and into the Middle East, building networks that would last for centuries. This coincided with the expansion of Arabic literacy through Islamic education that transformed the socioeconomic and political environment. By the 16th century, Borno

and Katsina had established a number of madrasas (schools of Muslim theology), but Islam nevertheless overlapped with indigenous religious beliefs and practices in Nigeria. It was not until the 19th century that Islamic law was implemented throughout the region and into the southwest through the creation of the Sokoto Caliphate by Usman dan Fodio, a Fulani preacher. The caliphate lasted 100 years, and during that time, it was Africa's largest independent state.

The caliphate was built by conquest following dan Fodio's jihad (struggle) against the Hausa rulers who had become oppressive and unpopular. The Sokoto Caliphate, a loose confederation of 30 emirates under the leadership of the sultan, stretched over 1,500 km, including parts of Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and northern Yorubaland. Both dan Fodio and his successor Muhammad Bello focused on expanding their caliphate regionally, and did not particularly strengthen ties with the Arab world. In fact, they even discouraged their subjects from going on pilgrimages and dan Fodio himself never completed the Hajj to Mecca.[9] Dan Fodio sought to create a pious society recreating the Prophet's, and implemented a "pure" form of Islam and sharia law throughout his territory. These legal and cultural changes contributed significantly to uniting the masses with a common Islamic identity, regardless of who ruled the territory and whether they were ethnically Hausa or Fulani.[10] Dan Fodio became the "model of a religious reformer" while his caliphate represented "the culmination of Islamic civilization."[11] His successes inspired further jihads in the region that led to the establishment of Islamic states in Senegal, Sudan, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, and Central African Republic. Abu Shekau, the leader of Boko Haram, has sought legitimacy by portraying himself as the successor to dan Fodio and called for the restoration of the Islamic caliphate in Nigeria in an open letter to the governor of Kano in August 2011.[12] Dan Fodio justified his war on the Muslim Hausa kings and the sultanate of Borno by calling them traitors to the Islamic faith, an accusation that resonates with Shekau's *takfiri* ideology.

On the other side of the country, British encounters with coastal Nigerians began in the 17th century and mainly centered on the trade of slaves (until 1807) and palm oil. The spread of culture and religion came second to mercantile interest, and Christian missionaries only started gaining a foothold in southern Nigeria in the mid-18th century. The people

that the British encountered in the south were generally organized politically in villages around chiefs and councils and operated in a relatively decentralized manner compared to the states in the north. Motivated in part by commercial interests, by competition with the French in West Africa, and by religious zeal, the British initiated the colonization of Nigeria, thereby amalgamating an ethnically and politically diverse community of people into one political unit. In 1861, Britain annexed Lagos as a Crown Colony, taking advantage of the breakup of the Oyo Empire (south of the river Niger in Yorubaland) and the ensuing Yoruba wars. Over the next 40 years, the colony expanded to the Oil Rivers and eventually reached the Middle Belt. The Sokoto Caliphate, weakened by half a century of corruption and internal strife, was conquered in 1903 and the caliph was killed by the British. In 1914, the caliphate was merged with other British holdings to form the colony of Nigeria. The regions, Yorubaland, the Oil Rivers, the Middle Belt, and the north, were already profoundly different in terms of their history, culture, and religions. As a result, the British chose to govern the country as separate entities, exacerbating the divergence between the north and the south.

BRITISH INDIRECT RULE

The decisions made by Governor-General Sir Frederick Lugard during the early days of colonization would shape Nigeria for decades. Against the best advice of E. D. Morel, the editor of the *African Mail*, who argued Nigeria should be divided into four provinces, Lugard decided to split the country into two administrative zones, north and south. His lieutenant governor also suggested seven provinces as a better representation of the country's ethnopolitical distribution, but Lugard himself was loath to abandon his plans and preferred to develop a simple administrative system that would reduce his own burden by delegating power to the existing elite.[13]

Lugard therefore implemented indirect rule in the north, taking advantage of and preserving the existing power structures of the Sokoto Caliphate and the rule of the local emirs who were made accountable to colonial officials. He discouraged and even banned Christian missionaries in the north, thereby restricting northerners' access to the European education that the southerners had, and recognized the use of sharia law in the north. On the

other hand, English was imposed on the region for administrative purposes. In addition to the existing Koranic schools, a very limited number of Western-style schools were also built, a policy that Ali and Yusuf later blamed for the corruption of the *Yan Boko*, the Western-educated elite. The Nigerians who would later come to lead the country were those who had been educated in Western schools, had worked in the civil service, and spoke English.[14] At the same time, northern Nigeria experienced a rapprochement with the Arab world as technological advances in transportation and increased access to the British colony of Sudan facilitated travel, educational exchanges, and pilgrimages. Exposure to the Arab community and deliberate political efforts by the governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf countries competing to gain influence in the region led to a rising Islamic identity that would later sharpen rivalries with the Christian south.

Lugard's attempts to institute indirect law in the east and south were less successful and led to riots against the new leaders whom the British had arbitrarily empowered.[15] In Yorubaland for instance, British indirect rule disrupted the traditional checks and balances of the Oba monarchy. In Igboland, the vacuum of a preexisting decentralized style of government made it nearly impossible for the British to identify who the local leaders were, rule by proxy, or even collect taxes. As a consequence, the chiefs supported by the British received little respect, trust, or obedience from the populations they were meant to govern. The eventual success of Christian missionaries, and evangelists in particular, did promote a common identity among the population in the east and eventually in west and central Nigeria. Christianity further helped create a southern elite open to Western ideas, which would come to dominate the state bureaucracies and political parties.

Lugard's political machinations eventually resulted in the creation of a federation of three states in 1954 that gave the regional governments decision-making power in the areas of education, agriculture, health care, and local administration. Foreign policy, security, communication, and transportation remained the responsibility of the federal government. This new system not only exacerbated existing sociopolitical differences but also created a political unit that could not be easily divided. The regions were dominated by the three major ethnic groups: the Hausa–Fulani in the north, the Igbo in the east, and the Yoruba in the west, although together they represented less than two-thirds of the population of Nigeria. In 1957,

Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, a London-educated northerner, became the first prime minister of Nigeria.

According to Nigerian historian Toyin Falola, "colonial Nigeria was nothing more than an artificially constructed agglomeration of diverse ethnicities and other loosely united groups […] and never acquired any enduring legitimacy."[16] Loyalties of the precolonial era outlasted the British presence and "turned the modern state into an arena of bitter competition for power and wealth,"[17] which would characterize the Nigerian political system for the next half century.

COMPETITION AND IN(TER)DEPENDENCE

Inevitably the federalization of Nigeria encouraged the creation of political parties along ethnopolitical lines from the early 1950s onward. The National Convention of Nigerian Citizens, the Northern People's Congress, and the Action Group each represented a major ethnic group and developed extensive networks around the country, leaving out many of the minority ethnicities. Competition for power and resources among these principal parties further exacerbated patronage in all echelons of the political system as the dominant ethnic groups congregated around a mere handful of political leaders who could protect their interests. Under these conditions, parties in power were reluctant to relinquish their advantage and clung on to their positions while the respective opposition parties ran the risk of being eternally left on the margins of politics.

At the time of independence in 1960, Nigeria was a fragile country divided by politically conscious ethnic groups vying for control over the federal government. In the early days, the relatively poorer, albeit more populated, north received, relative to what it contributed to the GDP, a disproportionate revenue allocation. This was in part due to the controversial derivative (allocation) formula that disbursed crude oil rents, from the Niger Delta, across the federation. The southwest since independence became heavily commercialized, with Lagos emerging as one of the largest business and commercial hubs in Africa. The eastern region became rapidly commercialized and industrialized, with business and trade helping to rejuvenate what was a war-torn part of the country. Finally, the Niger Delta, in the south-south, was the country's crude oil hub, and its largest contributor to federal revenue. Compared to these regions, the north

struggled to match its political dominance with social and economic development. Indeed, going by human development indices such as infant mortality, health care provision, education, and literacy rates, northern Nigeria continued to lag behind the other regions.

This imbalance from the very start heightened political tensions among the main players. The historical role of Islam in the north and the educational successes of Christian missionaries in the south ensured that the intelligentsia nearly exclusively belonged to one of the two dominant religions. The development of missionary Western-style schools predominantly in the south further divided the country along religious and economic lines. Indeed, the northern elite had initially resisted independence, fearful that diploma holders from the south would flood the north, seeking to capitalize on their education. They were right. At the time, the region had fewer than 2,000 school certificate holders to govern a population of 18 million people,[18] and northerners held less than 1 percent of high-level positions in government.[19]

From 1958 onward, a quota system determined that 50 percent of military recruits had to originate from the north, and 25 percent each from the western and eastern regions. On the other hand, the British had staffed the officers from among the educated classes, particularly the Igbo who continued to head the army after independence. As a result, highly educated southerners played a prominent role in the civil service, police, and armed forces, although the top politicians leading the first government postindependence originated from the north, due to the power distribution agreements inscribed in the new constitution.

The hope sparked by independence and the discovery of oil and natural gas reserves in Nigeria in the late 1950s and early 1960s was also short-lived. The imbalance within the political system and perceived corruption of the leadership led to one constitutional crisis after another. Politicians, feeding off extensive networks of patronage, antagonized the armed forces, who themselves resented the incompetence of their civilian leaders. In 1966, the army staged its first coup, killing, among others, Prime Minister Abubakar Balewa and his Premier Ahmadu Bello, both northerners, and ending the First Republic. Four of the five senior military officers from the north were also killed in the process, fermenting the ethnic tensions between the regions. The leadership of the country was taken over by Major General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, an Igbo, prompting suspicions that the coup

had been an Igbo conspiracy. Ironsi also abolished the regional autonomous structure of Nigeria and replaced it with a central administration. This led to a countercoup, orchestrated by Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu "Jack" Gowon, a Christian from the north, and fellow northern officers later that year. In the aftermath of the overthrow of Ironsi, at least 30,000 Christians and Igbos who had settled in the north were killed.[20] The 1966 coup triggered a series of military interventions that destabilized the country: during the next 28 years of military rule, two interventions brought an end to civilian governments, three ousted sitting military rulers, and countless more failed coup attempts were used as excuses to tighten control over the body politic.

BIAFRA AND EARLY SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS

The murders of the Igbos in the north prompted mass immigration back to Igboland, a prosperous region with a relatively educated population. Situated along the Niger Delta, Igboland held 67 percent of the known petroleum reserves in the country and contributed massively to Nigeria's income.[21] The attacks on the Igbos and the easy availability of independent wealth prompted General Odumegwu Ojukwu, the military governor of the eastern region, to declare the secession and independence of Biafra in May 1967. The loss of such valuable land, understandably, was unacceptable to the federal government, notwithstanding the tribal minorities in the territory who did not support the secession.

Biafra was not the only region in Nigeria tempted by secession. The three-region structure of the government at the time of independence only offered power to the main ethnic groups and excluded minority populations from giving any political input. Discontent with the existing system continued, and in the five years preceding the Biafra war, there were no less than 124 riots across the country.[22] The northern region itself had already threatened to secede in 1953, arguing that it was not ready to compete with the south, and since then secession has been used as a bargaining tool in Nigerian politics.

Regional agitation within the Niger Delta from 1965 culminated in what is now considered the country's first insurgency in 1966: the "10-day war." This was a brief armed insurgency and attempt at secession by the Ijaw ethnic group led by Isaac Adaka Boro, who was later given a commission as

a major within the Nigerian Army during the civil war. It is noteworthy that Adaka Boro and his group were pardoned, with Adaka Boro himself fighting for the Nigerian Army during the civil war and setting up a school for irregular warfare and riverine tactics—the army's first. Although the rebellion failed to gain much support, the use of military action to suppress the agitators was an indicator of how secessionist movements would be dealt with. Following the 1966 coup and purging of northern politicians and officers, the north "designed a separate flag and composed a national anthem in a move to proclaim the Republic of the North."[23] This project was abandoned, however, mostly due to economic and strategic considerations including access to the sea and the south's blooming oil wealth.

To discourage the secessionist ambitions of the Igbo, the federal government partitioned the country's (now) 4 regions into 12 substates. The east was divided into three substates, granting autonomy to some minority groups but strategically excluding Port Harcourt from Igbo State, thereby fragmenting the political cohesion of the southeast. The move failed, however, and in the ensuing 30-month civil war, between 500,000 and 1,000,000 civilians and soldiers were killed, mainly in combat. Starvation and disease resulting from the economic and military blockade of the southeast that largely targeted at civilians exacerbated an already high death toll. The United Kingdom and the United States chose to abstain from any political or military interference until it was clear which side was going to win. On the other hand, the Soviets provided the federal government with aircrafts and consultants. A number of African states, including Tanzania, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, and Zambia, supported the new "state" of Biafra. Both parties to the conflict employed mercenaries, especially fighter pilots, in the hope of gaining a quick military advantage.

The war ended in 1970 following a major and sustained land, air, and amphibious offensive by the federal forces. Gradually, the army recaptured virtually the entire territory of Biafra, including all the major towns and cities. The civil war of Nigeria ended with the flight of General Ojukwu to Côte d'Ivoire, the defeat of Biafra, and its political reintegration into Nigeria. General Gowon insisted in his "no winners, no losers" campaign to ensure that there would be no reprisals against Igbo or no reparations for the damages sustained by both sides. After the war, he instituted a rapid reintegration program under the leadership of the military and supported by

petroleum dollars. During the Biafra war, the government invested massively in the armed forces, swelling the number of recruits and officers from 10,000 men in 1966 to over 270,000 in 1970. Military spending grew from 0.2 percent of GDP in 1961 to 6 percent in 1970, which coincided with the oil boom and ensured that the economic interests of the armed forces would drive Nigerian politics for the next three decades.[24]

MILITARY RULE

Military governments grappling with the ethnic and religious power struggles characterized the post–civil war period. General Gowon's rule over Nigeria lasted until 1970 during which time corruption became rife, and the handover to civilian rule, promised for 1976, was postponed indefinitely. Gowon was eventually overthrown in a bloodless coup by General Murtala Mohammed, also a northerner who was originally involved in the coup against Ironsi in 1966. Mohammed's short rule was characterized by the forced retirement of 11,000 "corrupt" civil servants, and the demobilization of 100,000 soldiers, especially those associated with the Gowon era.[25] Mohammed was killed just six months after grabbing power, however, in an attempted coup led by fellow northerner Buka Suka Dimka. Troops loyal to Mohammed pursued Dimka, who was later executed, and the leadership reverted to Mohammed's deputy, Lieutenant General Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba.

After 10 years of military rule by the north that included a series of coups, Nigeria's fate was again in the hands of a southerner, albeit one who owed his success to northern officers. Obasanjo led the country for two and a half years, paving the way for a return to civilian rule. Obasanjo's regime also oversaw the creation of seven new states in Nigeria, redistributing the oil revenues around the country and promoting the political and economic autonomy of minority ethnic groups. The fragmentation of the country proved controversial, as three of the new states emerged from Yorubaland, Obasanjo's stronghold, leading to accusations that this would only favor states that already benefited from Nigeria's oil wealth.[26] On the eve of the transfer of power to civilian rule, Obasanjo nationalized the operations of British Petroleum, which he explained is punishment for the company's breaching of the international embargo on apartheid South Africa.

The first election of the Second Republic, held in 1979, did not run smoothly. The new constitution required that to avoid a runoff, the leading candidate must win not only the highest number of votes but also 25 percent of votes in at least two-thirds of the 19 states. The leading candidate was northerner Alhaji Shehu Shagari who represented the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), but he won 25 percent of votes in only 12 states, not the required 13. The Supreme Court ruled on the result of the election and in favor of Shagari, thereby ending 13 years of military rule.

Shagari's regime was every bit as corrupt as that of the First Republic. Individuals in power developed networks of patronage, distributing federal revenues to business and political allies in their home states. The government also launched a drastic borrowing campaign following the drop in oil prices in 1981, which doubled the national debt in just three years. Shagari's legitimacy was also tested over a dispute about implementing sharia law at the federal level in the form of an appellate court. This issue galvanized ethnoreligious sentiments across the country and subsequently stimulated a rise in sectarian violence. To defend himself against his growing unpopularity and the perpetual threat of a military coup, Shagari invested in the police force, multiplying its numbers from 10,000 in 1979 to 100,000 by 1983.[27] Heavily armed, the police force was reputed for silencing critics, stifling protests and rebellions, harassing the press, and disrupting the activities of rival political parties. At the time of the 1983 presidential elections, the leaders of the NPN "declared there were only two parties in Nigeria: the NPN and the military."[28] Shagari was reelected president among accusations of widespread fraud, ranging from voter intimidation to rigging of the registries. Three months after his inauguration, Shagari was removed from power and replaced by yet another northerner, Major General Muhammadu Buhari, returning the country to military rule for the next 15 years.

General Buhari, who would win the presidential elections 30 years later in 2015, addressed the corruption of the civilian regime by empowering the secret police service, the National Security Organization. Demonstrations and protests were banned, critics incarcerated, and the press censored. Buhari's austere philosophy led to a number of policies and laws that promoted a "War against Indiscipline." The death penalty was implemented for "drugs smuggling, tampering with electric cables and pipelines and counterfeiting currency."[29] Even cheating on exams was punishable with

long prison sentences. Human rights organizations were quick to condemn this police state that eroded civil liberties and enforced excessive punishments on Nigerians while also expelling 700,000 illegal immigrants from the country. Buhari oversaw the entrenchment of 200,000 civil servants and the imprisonment of 500 politicians accused of corruption. The country's economic woes and deep-seeded inequalities, however, were not addressed. Poor people were forced out of cities in an effort to clean up the centers, while no efforts were made to improve their living conditions. Twenty months after the coup, Buhari was overthrown by Major General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, a Muslim from Niger State.

Babangida had already participated in two military coups in 1975 and 1983. Toyin Falola describes the general as "politically adept, mixing authoritarian repression with a feigned interest in public opinion."[30] He recruited some of Buhari's critics into the government, reversed many of his predecessor's repressive laws, and adopted the title "president" instead of "head of state," suggesting a shift in rhetoric, if not in regime type. He reached a deal with the International Monetary Fund in 1986, instituting a structural adjustment program (SAP) that exacerbated existing inequalities across the country. Unemployment levels increased while the price of goods went up. Austerity measures led by the government reduced the already meager investment in public services, thus affecting health care, education, food, and fuel prices.

Faced with dire economic hardship, many Nigerians turned to religion, leading to the emergence of fundamental Islamic groups and Pentecostal sects. These organizations thrived in urban areas during the 1980s and 1990s and became highly influential among the political elite. Indeed, the popularity that both the Christian and Muslim groups enjoyed empowered their religious leaders to make demands on the government, such as changing the day of rest from Sunday to Friday or implementing sharia law and courts. Babangida responded by applying for Nigeria's membership to the Organization of the Islamic Conference, a policy that proved so controversial among the Christian south that he was forced to abandon it. The issues, however, indicated to the Christians that Babangida intended to secretly *islamize* Nigeria, which further exacerbated the tensions between the Muslim-led government and its Christian population. Babangida's eight years of rule were plagued by religious uprisings and riots between Muslims and Christian minorities, particularly in the north. They were also

characterized by student uprisings and strikes that were met with increasingly violent and repressive measures.

Another source of popular frustration was Babangida's empty promise to return the country to civilian rule. The transition process began in 1986, but elections were postponed several times until August 1993, when they were finally held. In the meantime, Babangida proceeded to reform the political structure of the country, creating 9 new states, bringing the total up to 30. For the presidential elections, he cleared just two candidates: Chief M. K. O. Abiola, a wealthy Muslim Yoruba businessman, and Bashir Tofa, a Kanuri businessman and also a Muslim. The elections were considered to be the most peaceful, freest, and fairest in the history of Nigeria, and Abiola won with 58 percent of the vote. Averse to relinquishing power, however, Babangida annulled the election result on trumped-up charges of corruption and ethnic manipulation, thereby provoking widespread riots, mostly from southern Nigerians who felt their election had been stolen once more by the northern-dominated military.

Talks of secession resurfaced in the aftermath of the annulled election. Yoruba activists toyed with the possibility of leaving the federation, and the concept of a second Biafra began to fuel fears of a return to civil war. The unrest eventually forced Babangida, who had by then lost all legitimacy, to hand over power to a transitional government, the Interim Governing Council (IGC). The legitimacy of the IGC was nonetheless undermined when the Lagos High Court declared the transitional government illegal. In the ensuing chaos, an ambitious military officer from Kano, General Sani Abacha, dissolved the IGC and declared himself head of state in November 1993, bringing forth a half decade of economic devastation to Nigeria.

Sani Abacha initially enjoyed measured support from Nigerians, reversing the unpopular SAP and retiring a number of Babangida's military advisers. On the other hand, he quickly dissolved existing political institutions, including the national assemblies, the governorships, and the electoral bodies, and banned all political parties and labor unions. The rate of incarcerations in Nigeria rose dramatically as regime opponents, journalists, and military officers were jailed on trumped-up charges. Even former head of state Olusegun Obasanjo and his deputy Shehu Yar'Adua were imprisoned in 1995 for allegedly plotting to overthrow the military ruler, an accusation that bears credibility in view of the army's track record. Several prominent activists, including the famous Ogoni author Ken Sari-

Wiwa, were sentenced to death and hung, drawing international condemnation of the regime. Nigerians who were able to leave the country did so, leading to an exodus of skilled and educated workers to the United States, the United Kingdom, and other more welcoming nations.

Abacha's Nigeria quickly became a pariah state: the reversal of the SAP showed that the regime could not be trusted to fulfill its promises to creditors. The human rights abuses of the military attracted widespread criticism, as did the rampant corruption that transcended all aspects of political life. As the value of the currency dropped, Abacha responded by printing more money, triggering inflation rates to 150 percent per annum.[31] In an effort to reclaim legitimacy and improve his image in the country, Abacha created six new states and began a political "transition" process that would ensure his continued rule. He announced elections for August 1998, and through a series of threats, bribes, and other measures, ensured his nomination as the sole candidate for all five authorized parties.

Before he could complete this process, however, Sani Abacha was found dead from a suspected heart attack "while cavorting with prostitutes"[32] in 1998. Although the official narrative claims that the leader died naturally, there has been much speculation in the Nigerian and Western press that he was actually poisoned by political rivals keen to get rid of the man. Buried the day following his death as per Islamic requirement, no autopsy was conducted on his body to support allegations of foul play. Investigations following his death concluded that Abacha and his family had embezzled $3 billion from the state, a huge amount by any standards. His associates, including the governor of the central bank, were equally corrupt and stole billions of dollars from the state coffers while racking up public debt. The Nigerian government has since negotiated with banks around the world to return the funds stolen under the Abacha regime.[33]

THE END OF THE "MEN ON HORSEBACK"

Sani Abacha's five-year reign left Nigeria in a dismal state, both domestically and internationally. His death signaled the end of military rule. The armed forces, as expected, had been no better—and probably worse—at leading the country than previous civilian governments.[34] From 1966 to 1998, the Nigerian armed forces ruled the country, with brief intermissions

of civilian leadership. The military leaders achieved relatively little in terms of the country's development, maintaining many of the political and social structures from the colonial period. Although the economy grew significantly during this time, largely thanks to the discovery of oil, the standard of living of ordinary Nigerians did not improve, while the inequalities between the elite and the rest rose exponentially.

To a certain extent the behavior of the Nigerian armed forces can be understood in light of the political system that British colonization left behind. The democratic deficit and lack of political and bureaucratic experience among the existing elite stipulated that the new leadership would have to "learn on the job," making mistakes as they ploughed through the difficult process of governing a complex and diverse country. The military's inherent need to maintain "internal order and stability"[35] prompted the generals to take matters into their own hands and overthrow the incompetent civilian government. The first coup in 1966 illustrates Nigeria's democratic deficit postindependence, as the military intervention by General Ironsi sought to protect the country's integrity and especially its unity when threatened by the possibility of a civil war. The Biafra war, of course, cemented the continued role of the armed forces as officers expanded their influence over politics. The conditions in Nigeria were therefore ripe for an extended military rule according to Samuel Finer's criteria:[36] public disillusionment with a civilian administration, the threat of disintegration and civil war, and reliance by those in power on the military for political survival.

The religious divide evidently grew under the leadership of the military, or the "men on horseback," who, despite extensive political machinations, were never able to legitimize their rule either to their population or even within the armed forces, as evidenced by the succeeding number of military coups. Dominated by largely northern military rulers, many southern Nigerians felt alienated and even victimized by a state whose leadership ignored the country's welfare and discriminated against its Christian population. Repeated military coups from mainly northern generals revealed that the north was competing for power and was ready to use force to keep the Christians out of office. In addition, the ethnic and religious tensions prevalent across the country were also manifest within the armed forces, to the extent that soldiers from different ethnicities could sometimes

not serve in the same unit. This also ensured that the military leadership would stay in the hands of the dominant ethnic group.

The failures of Abacha's military regime, and those that preceded it, reflect the limitations on the ability of the military to function as a government. As Morris Janowitz demonstrates in his seminal study, *The Professional Soldier*,[37] the military's organizational structure, command chain, and strict career lines are disrupted when they are overstretched and politically involved, leading to an internal breakdown in the cohesion and confidence of the armed forces. This was amply demonstrated in the coups, countercoups, and attempted coups over the 30-year period of military rule. The progressive weakening of the Nigerian Army and its total loss of legitimacy following Abacha's rule forced the transitional government of General Abdulsalami Abubakar to quickly open up the country to multiparty elections. Within a year, Nigeria had adopted a new constitution and held relatively credible elections, and the military had handed over the power to president-elect Olusegun Obasanjo, a former officer and military ruler.

OBASANJO AND CIVILIAN RULE

President Obasanjo had briefly governed the country under the military regime and was celebrated for handing over power to the democratically elected President Shehu Shegari in 1979—although Ambassador John Campbell affirms that he did not do so voluntarily but was forced to by the other generals in the government.[38] Nonetheless, Obasanjo was a divisive character from the start. A Yoruba from Ogun State in the southwest, Obasanjo was perceived as indebted to northern officers who had supported his career progress in the military.[39] As a consequence, two of the three major political parties, the Alliance for Democracy and the All People's Party, fielded a common candidate in the 1999 elections in the hope of defeating Obasanjo. Regardless, Obasanjo received 62 percent of the vote amid allegations of electoral malpractice and rampant vote rigging.

Obasanjo's eight-year rule, although the longest period of civilian rule in Nigeria's history, was fraught with political manipulations, corruption, and patronage. The president's machinations ensured that he maintained control over the country's political future well past the end of his term, thereby

undermining the stability of the democratic system. Indeed, it took 15 years from Obasanjo's ascent to power for a credible democratic election to finally take place in the country, in March 2015. Obasanjo's efforts to maintain the presidency included attempts to amend the constitution to abolish term limits, or exercise power from his position as the leader of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). The PDP has effectively dominated the political system since its creation in 1998, and assembles a medley of Nigerian military and business elite under the party umbrella. In the 2007 presidential elections, Obasanjo was able to handpick the presidential and vice presidential candidates: President Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan, respectively. Despite widespread criticism of his presidency, Obasanjo did establish the precedent of civilian governments succeeding one another and took a firm position against military coups. His past as a military commander no doubt helped to establish his credibility in both camps.

Despite the return to civilian rule, Nigeria failed to reach a level of economic development that could appease its frustrated population. Obasanjo managed to reestablish Nigeria's international standing, attracting foreign investment, and reducing the country's external debt from $35 billion to $5 billion. The GDP growth rose from 2.7 percent in 1998 to 6.3 percent at the time he left the presidency.[40] On the other hand, very little of the newfound economic prosperity trickled down the social ladder or across the country. There was limited investment in education and health care, and no efforts to address the ethnic and religious tensions plaguing the country. The ongoing deterioration of land due to oil exploitation in the Niger Delta further exacerbated socioeconomic grievances, leading to riots and outright rebellions. The creation of the militant Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta in 2004 pinned the local Ogonis and other ethnic minorities against the oil companies and the government in a tug of war over the control for oil resources. The group also illustrates the alienation of a population vis-à-vis its government and the latter's apathy to the utter degradation of the local environment.

Religious tensions resurfaced with the return to democracy, with both the Muslims and the Christians vying to influence politics and implement their cultural and religious practices within the legal system. In a spirit of democracy and federal autonomy, sharia courts became the controlling legal system in 12 states in 1999: Kano, Katsina, Niger, Sokoto, Borno, Kaduna,

Jigawa, Kebbi, Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe, and Zamfara. Islamic law thereby gained equal standing to secular law and the Nigerian Penal Code in these regions. This inevitably antagonized the minority Christian population living in these states, who objected to the death penalty for "crimes" such as apostasy and adultery. Vincent Nmehielle argues that the unilateral adoption of sharia law by the northern states "violates the Nigerian Constitution […] which make[s] Nigeria a secular state" and that "while it may be the desire of Muslims to enact laws based on the Islamic faith to govern their daily life, such desire must be measured in relation to the desires of followers of other religions."[41] Dividing Nigeria's legal system along ethnoreligious lines could only imperil the unity and integrity of the country. At the same time, the choice of northern states to apply sharia law demonstrates the frustrations of a population with a perceived secular system that offended its religious and cultural practices. This was evidenced in Kaduna in 2002 when riots over the Miss World beauty pageant left 200 people dead. Further, deadly protests over the Dutch cartoons in 2006 were a reminder of the sensitivity of the Nigerian religious groups to controversial and arguably provocative events both domestically and abroad. In his eight years in power, Obasanjo did little to alleviate the ethnopolitical divide in his country; he even exacerbated the situation through his own ethnic allegiances.

THE POLITICS OF ZONING

In view of the ethnic tensions and the tumultuous political past of Nigeria, a true democratic process had to ensure that no majority group would dominate another nor should anyone be alienated from government. As a result, the military and civilian elite came to an informal understanding by which the presidency would rotate between the states. This understanding came to be known as "zoning," and originated in the internal rules and regulations of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) that, in 1979, pledged to fill key political positions with representative from all four geopolitical zones. Although this turned out to be little more than a strategy to win the elections, it laid down the foundations for a new norm to address the problem of ethnicized voting.

The PDP, until recently the ruling party in Nigeria, also informally adopted the concept of zoning, promising to field presidential candidates

alternatively from the Muslim north and largely Christian south. The practice of zoning, although it had no legal mandate, undermined the Nigerian Constitution and marginalized all minority ethnic groups from politics. Zoning effectively removed the choice of the presidential candidate from the population as they were presented with the ruling party's candidate who, in theory, alternated between the north and the south, leaving little choice for alternatives. This candidate was selected by the party's elite as a result of a political arrangement, rather than an internal democratic process.

The 2003 presidential elections highlighted the weakness of the zoning agreement. Rather than stepping down in favor of his vice president and fellow PDP member and northerner Atiku Abubakar, as would be expected in the power-sharing agreement, President Obasanjo stood for reelection. Obasanjo was able to secure the PDP's support by drawing on his vast "patron-client network and his international support and prestige,"[42] and by promising Atiku his support in the 2007 elections. The 2003 elections were marred by violence, intimidation, and vote-rigging that facilitated widespread fraud and undermined the credibility of the electoral process—although it guaranteed that Obasanjo would defeat the northern presidential candidate and former military dictator, Muhammadu Buhari.[43] The outcome of the 2003 election was in fact only decided in July 2005 when the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Obasanjo, thereby dismissing the findings of lower courts that the elections had been fraudulent, although this brought about allegations of judicial malpractice.[44]

Obasanjo's attempts to secure a third term in 2007, and thereby further disregarding the power-sharing agreement, provoked an alliance of the north's elite, who blocked the constitutional amendments that the president required. His ambition to maintain power divided the country's elite and especially angered the Muslim population who felt cheated out of power and took to the streets to voice their opposition to a third-term Christian president. The heightened tensions increased the probability of a military coup and, according to some sources, a possible civil war.[45]

Faced with rigid opposition, President Obasanjo turned to his plan B to maintain his influence over Nigerian politics. He imposed his candidate, Umaru Yar'Adua, governor of Katsina, as his successor in the PDP. Other candidates were sidelined through intimidation and bribery, and Obasanjo allegedly voiced his "surprise and anger" at the opposition he encountered

within his party.[46] The zoning agreement, however, was respected by the selection of a southern Christian, Goodluck Jonathan, as vice president. Yar'Adua was able to rally the support of the PDP's elite, who were motivated by the relief that Obasanjo might be stepping down, and by ambition to maintain their political networks through the continuous rule of their party.

Despite his previous quasi-anonymity, Yar'Adua won the 2007 presidential elections hands down and amidst massive electoral fraud. Out of an estimated total turnout of 14 million voters, Yar'Adua allegedly won 24 million votes, statistically impossible and demonstrating widespread fraud.[47] The EU Elections Observation Mission concluded that, due to the excessive rigging evidenced, "there can be no confidence in the results of these elections."[48] The two losing candidates, Buhari and Atiku Abubakar, appealed to the Court of Appeals and Supreme Court to have the elections invalidated—in vain. The Court upheld the elections although it admitted that they had been deeply flawed. There was relatively limited violence in the 2007 elections, despite the overt corruption. Ambassador Campbell attributes this to a general apathy and disillusionment with the democratic system by a population who felt it really did not have a political choice, and that this was not worth dying for.[49] On the other hand, for the first time in the history of Nigeria, a civilian government had succeeded another.

President Obasanjo's ambition to control the body politic from the PDP came to naught. His reputation quickly deteriorated following the outrageous rigging of the 2007 elections and accusations, by his own son among others, of sexual deviance and corruption. In addition, President Yar'Adua's ill health forced him to take a step back from power, thereby weakening Obasanjo's political influence. Yar'Adua's death in May 2010 precipitated the country into a new political crisis. The National Assembly voted to make his vice president, Goodluck Jonathan, acting president, forestalling the threat of a military coup. By taking over the reins of the government, Jonathan cut short the north's turn to rule the country. Following eight years of Christian leadership, the northern elite felt robbed of their opportunity to gain from the presidency. They remained subdued, however, as President Jonathan indicated that he was just finishing Yar'Adua's term and would not be running for the presidency until 2015, at which point it would be the turn of the south again.

The zoning agreement and northern dreams of regaining power were shattered in 2011 when Jonathan disregarded his earlier pledge and stood for the presidential elections. Jonathan did not seem to be consumed with presidential ambition, however, and this was underscored in the 2015 elections when he gracefully handed over the power to President Buhari. Rather it is likely that the elite benefiting from Jonathan's rule ensured that he would remain in power as long as possible and by all means available. As the first president from the Delta region and the first Ijaw, Jonathan's presidency actually *was* proof that the old elite did not have a complete monopoly over power, although this was perceived in the north as little more than a victory for the Christian south.

VIOLENCE AND PARTY POLITICS IN 2011

Goodluck Jonathan's bid to extend his rule beyond the limit imposed by the informal zoning agreement antagonized the northern elite, but not sufficiently for them to rally together behind one presidential candidate. The PDP had fielded every presidential winner since its creation in 1998, and there was little faith that its hold on the political system would be easily broken. Three other parties had enough support that they could have challenged the status quo had they worked together. The Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) maintained its base in the west, the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) was popular among northerners, and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) enjoyed support in several regions. These parties elected governors, senators, and representatives to the National Assembly but, until 2015, no presidential winners.

The 2011 elections therefore played out along ethnoreligious lines, with a Christian and a Muslim candidate competing for the presidency without any prearranged agreement. Goodluck Jonathan ran for the PDP while Muhammadu Buhari represented the CPC and won the support of the ANPP. The ACN fielded its own candidate, the former Lagos state governor Bola Tinubu. One could argue that this was the closest to truly free democratic elections that Nigeria had ever seen, although the elite from the two main ethnopolitical parties appealed to their support base along religious lines. This inevitably raised the stakes of the elections. Jonathan won the support of Muslim leaders such as the sultan of Sokoto and the emirs of Zaria and Kano with political promises and cash, and appealed to

the Middle Belt through their common Christian identity. The rest of the Muslim community, which makes up a relative majority of the population, rallied behind Buhari.

The previous presidential elections of 2007 inevitably cast a shadow over the 2011 elections. Prior experience of outright electoral fraud provoked low expectations from the general population that 2011 would be "free and fair." Indeed, when Goodluck Jonathan won not only 57 percent of the popular vote outright but also received 95–99 percent of votes in 12 southern states, the credibility of the elections was seriously undermined. In addition, the sitting president won over 25 percent of the vote in 8 of the 12 sharia states, which incidentally were governed by a member of the PDP, the political party to which Jonathan belonged.

The voting pattern clearly divided the country along religious lines and a now-cynical population turned to violence to vent its frustration with the existing system. Three days of rioting followed the announcement of Jonathan's victory. A report by Human Rights Watch estimated that 65,000 people were displaced as a result of this cycle of violence.[50] The private homes of PDP supporters in the north, including that of the sultan of Sokoto, were torched, and Christians and members of southern ethnic groups were murdered. Christians in the south retaliated, killing 800 Muslims, including women and children in Kaduna, Buhari's home state. Some of the violence was likely instigated by Buhari's accusations that the "ruling party had rigged the election,"[51] and his failure to immediately condemn the attacks fueled speculation that he might benefit from the chaos. Ambassador Campbell argues however that "Buhari could not control northern rage, and he certainly did not encourage it."[52] The violence in Kaduna was neither new nor surprising, as ethnoreligious violence has marred the state for over a decade: The introduction of sharia law in 2000 previously triggered sectarian clashes that left at least 2,000 people dead.

Goodluck Jonathan responded to the ethnic clashes by implementing martial law in a number of northern states and surrounding himself in Abuja by members of his own Ijaw ethnic group. The alienation of the government from the Nigerian population, and especially from the north, provided an opportunity for radical movements, such as Boko Haram, to expand. The sect played on existing frustrations to recruit members into its fold under the pretense that it was fighting a war against the government and its corrupt security and military forces. The violent reprisals from the latter and

evidence of gross incompetence, especially in the case of the kidnapping of over 200 girls from Chibok, further fueled the conflict by demonstrating that the representatives of the Jonathan government did not care about its citizens in the north. In addition, the cut in the federal petroleum subsidy in January 2012 particularly affected the poverty-ridden northern states, pushing an increasingly disillusioned and desperate population into the eager hands of Boko Haram.

THE 2015 ELECTIONS

Despite the apparent end of the zoning system, the 2015 presidential elections both promised hope and caused much apprehension among the Nigerian population. The ever-ruling PDP presented Jonathan as its candidate for the elections as early as 2013, causing despair that power would never return to the north. The president's collapsing popularity however offered a chance for an opposition candidate to garner more votes, assuming that the elections would be free and fair this time. Indeed, Goodluck Jonathan during his five-year tenure proved to lack the character and courage necessary to mobilize the armed forces and address the security threat that Boko Haram had developed into. He failed to combat corruption or implement the much-needed economic reform, especially in the north. Inequality and poverty continued to rise. And Nigerians felt the hostility of divided countrymen desperate for political empowerment. By 2015, there was real anger and frustration toward the manipulative ruling elite, and the population no longer appeared resigned to the status quo.

The All Progressive Congress (APC) and major opposition parties finally united behind one candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, in a bid to democratically oust Jonathan from power. The APC's internal democratic process was celebrated as fair and transparent and was televised across the country. This contrasted with the PDP's usual elite horse trading that unsurprisingly endorsed the sitting president as its undisputed candidate.[53] An internal fracture among the PDP's leading members contributed to weaken its position: among the high-level defectors, its founder and former president Olusegun Obasanjo publicly tore up his membership card and endorsed Buhari for the presidency.[54] A defeat of the ruling party through democratic means however would be unprecedented in Nigeria.

Much depended on the credibility of the presidential elections and on the effectiveness of the Independent National Electoral Commission led by its chairman, Professor Attahiru Muhammadu Jega. Professor Jega was appointed by Goodluck Jonathan in 2010, and is highly regarded for his integrity.[55] The doctoral graduate from Northwestern University and former vice chancellor of Bayero University in Kano had overseen the vastly improved 2011 elections, and his calm leadership in the 2015 electoral process earned him the trust and appreciation of many Nigerians. Jega announced the decision in February 2015 that the elections would be postponed for two months, following the advice of the nation's security chiefs. This would enable the voting to proceed in the violence-ridden northeast and buy time to distribute millions of biometric voter cards. Although the delay was unpopular and widely criticized among the international community, it did not detract the country from the path of democracy, as the elections were successfully held on schedule in April.

Although there were some irregularities in the 2015 elections, which Professor Jega acknowledged, they "were not enough to warrant a cancellation of the election."[56] Voting was extended in 300 of the 150,000 polling stations, and it took two days to count all the votes. But it quickly became clear that the APC had won a historical election: for the first time in the history of Nigeria, an opposition candidate had won and by more than 2,000,000 votes. Buhari's election also returned power to the north, reestablishing the zoning agreement and thereby assuaging the Muslim population. Despite fears of violence the like of the 2011 elections, there was relatively limited bloodshed. Although at least 40 people were killed by suspected Boko Haram gunmen in polling stations across the northeast, the government feared that the violence would have been much worse. Voter turnout was reasonably high, even reaching 50 percent in Yobe, a Boko Haram stronghold.[57] Goodluck Jonathan also played his role in this peaceful transfer of power, conceding defeat gracefully and calling Muhammadu Buhari to congratulate the new president on his victory.

BUHARI AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Muhammadu Buhari does not have an easy time ahead of him. He has promised to respond to the security threat of Boko Haram, and while

Jonathan and the national army have recently met with some success, the government will need to address some serious grievances to fully dismantle the terrorist group. The security forces have suffered from low morale, poor and divisive leadership, and a lack of investment in the training and equipment necessary to defeat Shekau's well-armed guerilla. The process of demilitarization started with the return to civilian rule under Olusegun Obasanjo and continued under Goodluck Jonathan, an understandable policy in view of the army's past political ambitions. Buhari's military credentials and relationships can help him implement his vision for the reform of the armed forces and motivate the Muslim-dominated officers to follow his lead without threatening the democratic process. He may also choose to continue Jonathan's policy of sourcing military support from private security companies and international consultants as a short-term solution to compensate for the army's weaknesses—although so far this hasn't been necessary. President Buhari has made the defeat of Boko Haram a priority of his administration, and he has the determination to make a serious security commitment to the northeast by deploying sufficient troops to the region, starting with the move of the military headquarters to Maiduguri. He has also promised to invest "in the very education [Boko Haram] despises to help people protect themselves," voicing Nelson Mandela's belief that "education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."[58]

Boko Haram has enjoyed limited support in the Muslim north. However, its versatility, the intractability of insurgency as a *forme de guerre*, and the specific challenges of the operational environment will make it difficult for the army to completely annihilate the group. A credible federal government that seriously addresses the gross inequalities between its citizens will go a long way toward diminishing the appeal of Boko Haram. Of primary importance therefore will be investment both in education and in employment in the north and reducing the income gap between the country's regions. This will be a slow process but evident efforts from the government will buy time for the new policies to take root and have a tangible effect. The president also has to tackle the issue of corruption, which undermines the credibility of the government and further divides the country between the haves and the have-nots. His own reputation for integrity, and his draconian policies when he was previously in power, suggests that he will take a strict position on corruption.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: THE NORTH–SOUTH DIVIDE AND NATIONAL SECURITY

The election of opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari to the presidency has been a victory for democracy above all else. The north is perhaps celebrating its return to power, but it is important to highlight the pitfalls of a power-sharing agreement that circumvents the democratic process. Since the independence of Nigeria, the north has dominated the politics of the country, primarily via illegitimate military regimes. On the other hand, the civilian governments elected and reelected have mostly been Christians from the south, including Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan. The north is more populated whereas most of the country's petroleum resources are in the south. As a result, both regions have been vying for power to control the country's wealth. Whereas the north has relied on its larger population base and recurrent military coups to ensure its participation in government, southern presidents have repeatedly rigged elections and counted on nepotism to stay in power. In both cases, the democratic process has been hollowed.

The recent monopoly over power that the south has enjoyed however has alienated the Muslim population in the north. Under succeeding Christian presidents, poverty in the north has increased, widening the gap with the relatively wealthier south. Boko Haram's military successes in the northeast and the government's apparent disinterest and incompetence at restoring security have proven that the region's well-being cannot be left solely in the hands of a southerner. Buhari's victory will go a long way toward restoring the faith of his northern citizens in the political system, although he must also live up to the expectations of his southern residents who have their own legitimate grievances, including fair access to oil resources and the degradation of the land along the Niger Delta.

Any leader in Nigeria faces the problem of governing a multiethnic and religiously divided country. To avoid the threat of sectarian insurgencies and separatist aspirations, the president needs to cater to the demands of all his people, which begins with reducing the north–south divide. Inequality is a catalyst for frustration, envy, anger, and violence. While the armed forces can deter uprisings to a degree, a committed investment in the infrastructure and education of all regions in Nigeria is vital to make a nation out of all these people. Charles de Gaulle complained about the difficulties of governing "246 types of cheese," referring to the different cultural regions

and expectations of the French. The political elite of Nigeria has so far managed to keep the country together, sometimes against all odds. An alliance among the military and political elite is no longer enough, and as evidenced by the aspirational 2015 elections, Nigerians are now demanding to participate in the fate of their country. The future will depend on the government's ability to cater to the people's demands, in particular for a safe and prosperous country for all.

CHAPTER 2

Violence and Religious Rivalry

Nigeria's political history is closely intertwined with religious rivalry, and in particular the competition between the Muslim and Christian faiths that divide the country along ethnopolitical lines. The country hosts the largest number of Muslims in Africa and is also home to an estimated 87.5 million Christians who make up about 49 percent of the population. Religion has a strong influence throughout the country, and variations of Islam and Christianity have historically thrived in this environment. In addition, some groups led by charismatic and outspoken preachers have tried to push through their political agenda by a number of means, some including violence. Nigerian scholar Toyin Falola explains that religious dominance in his country drives "proponents of Christianity or Islam […] to unseat the rival religion, to impose their own values, and to control the state."[1]

In recent years, religious extremism in particular appears to be on the rise. Between 1999 and 2003, over 10,000 people were killed in religiously motivated violence[2]—even before the advent of Boko Haram. Muslims do not have a monopoly over the use of violence. In 1987, for example, Christians in Kafanchan, Kaduna State, "wantonly destroyed the property of local Muslims,"[3] and in 2014, Human Rights Watch denounced the murder of 150 Muslims killed in "Christian rampages"[4] in Kuru Karama, in Jos Plateau.

The successful rise of Boko Haram from a small religious cult into an internationally recognized Islamist terrorist group with the ability to kill tens of thousands of people can be partially explained through the lens of

overlapping religious–political rivalries, of which there is a significant track record in the country. The apparent espousal of violent extremism by a small portion of the population has been portrayed by the government of President Goodluck Jonathan as evidence of Islamist terrorism, rather than the expression of socioeconomic and political grievances. In reality, Boko Haram is both a sectarian group and a sociopolitical movement: it attracts a population that is discontent with the leadership of the country, the growing inequalities across the country, and the excessive brutality of the armed forces under a unifying goal to overthrow the state.

ISLAM IN NIGERIA

Both conversion and conquest contributed to the rise of Islam in Nigeria. The religion has a history of militancy, much like Christianity and many other religions. In the 19th century, however, following the successful jihad of Usman dan Fodio, Islam became the dominant religion in the north of Nigeria. The first caliphate was established around Sokoto and lasted for 100 years before British imperial ambitions swallowed it up. The southwest of the country also underwent a period of Islamization during which time a southern caliphate was developed around the city of Ilorin in Yorubaland. Yoruba Islam on the other hand was spread mostly through peaceful means —about 40 percent of the Yoruba population converted to Islam, and accommodated and incorporated indigenous beliefs that continue to mark the difference between the two regions in the interpretations of the same religion. Some Muslims believe that coexistence and tolerance are undesirable, though, and that Islam should instead be implemented by any means necessary. As a result, select Muslim leaders are periodically preaching for the purification of the religion and the country through a holy jihad, which at times has led to clashes with other religions and between branches of Islam.[5]

Islamic fundamentalism is mostly found in northern Nigeria, where Islam is dominant and poor socioeconomic conditions have provided an excellent opportunity for recruiting and radicalizing the vulnerable disenfranchised youths. Factors such as illiteracy, inequality, and poverty are drivers for religious extremism, and explain the success that groups such as Boko Haram and Maitatsine have enjoyed in the relatively impoverished north.

Indeed, the region has experienced a much higher proportion of religious violence than other parts of the country.

There are four major interpretations of Islam that advocate for political reform in Nigeria. These groups tend to compete with each other for converts and political hegemony, leading to a constant struggle between the religious cults in the country. Sufism is predominant in West Africa, where it was propagated principally by merchants rather than scholars. Approximately 90 percent of Nigerian Muslims identify with Sufism.[6] The most prominent orders are Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya, also called the Sufi Brotherhoods, in northern Nigeria. The founder of the first caliphate, Usman dan Fodio, was an adherent to Qadiriyya, which he considered both an ideology and a practical approach to political reform. Indeed, Qadiri, which was brought to northern Nigeria in the 15th century, values innovation as a means to spiritual awakening and is therefore relatively adaptable but perceived by many hardliners as too innovative to be puritanical.

Both orders incorporate meditation and mysticism, with an emphasis on the inner struggle or jihad for self-enlightenment. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tijani, the founder of Tijaniyya in 18th-century Algeria, was originally a member of Qadiriyya but left the sect after becoming disillusioned with its rigid hierarchy and its failure to sufficiently help the poor. Both branches of Sufism have a history of jihad and influential leaders. They view each other principally as competitors and rarely cooperate.[7] In fact, they have frequently armed themselves to prepare for the inevitable battle. This rivalry has enabled other interpretations of Islam to emerge in reaction to the perceived corrupt Sufi "Brotherhoods."

The *Jama'atul Izalatul Bid'ah Wa'Ikhamatul Sunnah*, or Izala for short, developed in opposition to Sufism. The name itself means "society for the removal of innovation and the reinstatement of tradition." Izala is a Salafi organization that aims to strip Islam of all impurities, especially Western influences, and adopts a legalist reading of the scriptures: the Koran, the sunnah, and the hadith. It was founded in 1978—although it really picked up in the 1990s—by Sheikh Abubakar Gummi, a scholar who received financial support from the Saudi royal family. As a result, there are a number of similarities between Izala and Wahhabism.[8]

To a certain extent, it could be argued that Izala was built on the ashes of the first premier of northern Nigeria and grandson of Usman dan Fodio,

Ahmadu Bello. Bello was killed by Igbo officers in 1966, an act that prompted Gummi to radicalize his stance against Sufis, "in part in retaliation against the politicians and religious leaders who seemed to either benefit from or care little about Bello's assassination."[9] Although Izala is closer to Boko Haram's interpretation of Islam than many of its contemporaries, it is not necessarily a violent manifestation of religion. Muslims are encouraged to pursue political change by engaging actively with the state apparatus. By definition in Nigeria, being a part of the political elite means acquiring a Western-style education. This appeals particularly to a better educated demography, including businessmen and civil servants, unlike Boko Haram that attracts a following from the millions of jobless youths.[10]

The followers' political aspirations—Gummi was "one of the few religious figures allowed to broadcast and write freely" under the military regime of General Babangida[11]—also exposed them to accusations of corruption by competing religious factions. Mohammed Yusuf latched on to this when he founded Boko Haram. A former *almajiri*—that is a student of the Koranic schools—he was ridiculed for not having a formal education despite acquiring an impressive knowledge of the holy scriptures. Originally a member of the Izala and a disciple of the famous preacher Sheikh Jafar Adam, he cut ties with the organization, denouncing the rampant corruption and political allegiances of the Izala clerics. Like Boko Haram, "Izala acted as an anti-establishment movement that articulated popular anger against the political class, yet on a local level politicians and religious leaders often found ways of getting along with and profiting from each other."[12]

A third important religious presence in Nigeria is found in foreign-influenced Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the *Ja'amutu Tadjidmul Islami* (The Movement for Islamic Revivalism). The Muslim Brotherhood was established in Nigeria in the 1940s and spread throughout the 1950s and 1960s, thanks to the migration of Egyptian Brothers during Gamal Abdel Nasser's regime. More recently, members of the international Muslim Brotherhood have been investing heavily in Nigerian assets. The United Nations–designated terrorist group has been accused of channeling funds by potential sponsors of radical groups to like-minded organizations.[13]

The Islamic revival movements are also strongly influenced by Iranian clerics. In the past 30 years, the pro-Iranian Shi'a Muslim community grew from virtually zero to over 5 percent of Muslims in Nigeria, a result of Iran's aggressive but successful religious campaign.[14] The rhetoric of fiery Shi'a Imams from the Islamic Movement in Nigeria led by Ibrahim al-Zakzaky adds to the already complex religious environment in the country.

Finally, a fourth radical interpretation of Islam is found in the Mahdi and messianic movements that developed in Nigeria as expressions of anticolonialism.[15] All Abrahamic religions share this notion of an expected delivery or revelation that will mark the end of this world. But a number of Muslim scholars have cultivated a narrative in which a saviour by the name *al-Mahdi*—which means "the rightly guided one"—would restore Islam to its rightful place and impose justice on earth, with several individuals at some point in time claiming to be this messiah. This belief was particularly popular in medieval Africa and throughout the colonial period when it led to a number of violent uprisings against the French and British authorities.[16] The beheading of the British governor general in Sudan by fanatical Mahdists in 1885 created an apprehension around messianic movements such that "the very word 'Mahdist' stirred up fearful jitters anew in the colonial officer, able to make even the most irrepressible imperialist flinch," according to author Andrew Walker.[17] Mahdism has also been the cause of much discord among many Christian and Muslim groups in contemporary Nigeria that continue to expect the arrival of a leader that will set the world right. The popularity of messianist interpretations of religion was one of the causes for the Maitatsine riots between 1980 and 1985, during which close to 10,000 people were killed in violent clashes with the security forces.

THE MAITATSINE MOVEMENT

The Maitatsine violence in the 1980s was instigated by Muhammad Marwa, a self-proclaimed prophet (*anabi*) from Cameroon. His nickname "Maitatsine" inspired the name of the revolt that took place first in Kano before spreading to other cities in northern Nigeria. It is derived from his repeated use of the sentence, "*Wanda bata yarda ba Allah ta Tchine*" (May Allah curse the one who disagrees with his version), and its amalgamation with *Mai*, which means master.[18] Many scholars have drawn comparisons

between the Maitatsine movement and the rise of Boko Haram, which appear to match each other in "intensity, organization and spread."[19] Both groups embraced fanatical beliefs that are different from those held by a majority of Muslims in Nigeria. They freely employed violence to challenge the state and impose their interpretation of Islam. And both organizations have suffered the culling of their leadership and subsequent revival through the efforts of zealous members.

Falola explains the Maitatsine riots as "a consequence of Islamic fundamentalism on the one hand, and of the political decadence and economic troubles of the 1970s on the other."[20] The riots coincided with the oil boom in Nigeria that triggered a social revolution, which displaced a number of traditional merchants and was characterized by high unemployment, rampant corruption, and general popular discontent. A series of environmental disasters including droughts and desertification, which reduced the supply of agricultural products and increased the price of food, further squeezed the population and thus exacerbated the situation. Mass urbanization ensued, and many of the unemployed youths in the cities turned to radical preachers in a bid to maintain their traditional religious beliefs in an apparently amoral society. Most of Marwa's followers were poor and jobless, had been made bankrupt by the economic downturn, or were driven off land that was no longer fruitful. They lived with the preacher who supported them with donations received from more wealthy members of the community. The rate at which his group increased its recruitment pool is testimony both to Marwa's charisma and to the dismal economic situation at the time: in 1975 he had over 2,000 followers; by 1980 that number had tripled in Kano alone and more regionally.[21]

The success of Maitatsine is also the result of political failures. Political rivalries and police incompetence meant that Marwa was free to develop his cult without any effective government control. When the Kano State House of Assembly attempted to regulate dangerous public preaching, local leaders opposed the motion on the grounds that these preachers had contributed to their election in the first place. The issue became a point of contention for rival political parties who sought to use the messianic movement to undermine the credibility of the government. Even the National Security Organization, which had incriminating evidence on the Maitatsine refused to share it with other security agencies due to

"bureaucratic inefficiency and […] personal rivalries among political appointees in the agencies."[22]

A number of comparisons can be drawn between Boko Haram's former leader Mohammed Yusuf and Muhammad Marwa. While Yusuf did not by any means call himself a prophet, both men inspired complete devotion from their followers. In addition, Boko Haram and Maitatsine espoused a rejection of Western influence and modernization, although Marwa's group did so to a larger extent. The Cameroonian religious leader denounced all uses of technology, including radios, watches, cars, and bicycles; he considered the Koran as the only permissible book to read and attacked Western education, much like Mohammed Yusuf.[23] This antimaterialist dogma particularly appealed to the dispossessed in large urban centers such as Kano. Marwa's interpretation of Islam was also unorthodox, in particular in his identification as a prophet, which undermined the Prophet Muhammad's place as God's last prophet. This drew significant criticism from other clerics, some of whom considered Marwa a dangerous lunatic. It did not pose a problem for the Maitatsine, however, who considered other Muslims to be infidels.

Recognizing the likely threat of a police or military response to their controversial group, the Maitatsine progressively armed themselves and underwent physical and military training. Two bodyguards protected Marwa at all times. Notwithstanding the militarization of the group, there is very little evidence that Maitatsine had political ambitions beyond Kano. The group's increased aggression in the late 1970s could easily have been a reaction to public hostility and to the security clampdown, as it could have been part of a greater plan. Unlike Yusuf and his successor Abu Shekau, what Marwa's "real political motives were may never be known,"[24] as he was killed in 1980 by a leg injury sustained during clashes with the police.

By 1980, the Maitatsine community in Kano had grown into a public nuisance. They were harassing passersby, clashing with the police and overtly challenging the local government. Security forces openly admitted their fear of the Maitatsine who were said to have "mystical power to withstand bullets."[25] Marwa's followers did outnumber the police in Kano, had better morale, and were arguably better trained and armed. This comparative advantage seemed to empower Marwa. Confronted on December 8, 1980, by the police in the Shahuci playing ground in Kano

where they regularly went to preach, the Maitatsine overwhelmed the 150-strong police force and burned down all 13 of their vehicles. Emboldened by their victory, the Maitatsine decided to seize the advantage and attacked the Fagge mosque, police stations, school buildings, Christians, and Muslims unsympathetic to their cause. Faced with the prospect of complete anarchy in Kano, President Shagari sent in the army with a mandate to destroy the Maitatsine base and restore order. Within two days, at least 4,000 people had been killed, and security forces arrested an additional 1,000 Maitatsine who were subsequently detained without trial—many of whom were also subject to torture in custody.[26]

After the uprising, the Maitatsine dispersed around the country where they continued to spread their interpretation of Islam. A high number of them were imprisoned, thereby burdening the already overstretched penitentiary system—a presidential pardon was issued in 1982 in a bid to relieve the prisons although prison records show that "most of the Yan Tatsine died of heart failure, starvation, thirst or disease."[27] The sect members reassembled in the cities of northern Nigeria, rearming in anticipation of an inevitable encounter with the state. In October 1982, Maitatsine clashed with the police, this time in Balumkutu, 15 km from Maiduguri. Four days of fighting left over 3,350 people dead and those who survived fled to other cities. This led to new outbreaks of violence a few days later as fanatics sought refuge in Rigasa, near Kaduna, where they were encountered by vigilantes eager to destroy the much-feared Maitatsine. Rumors of the presence of Maitatsine members were sufficient to cause panic, leading to more outbreaks of violence in Kano and Zaria.

Further encounters between the Maitatsine survivors and the police wreaked havoc in Yola in 1984, leading to the deaths of between 700 and 1,000 people, the displacement of a further 30,000 people, and the demolition of the Yola central market. In 1985, a last Maitatsine uprising took place in Gombe at the home of one of the survivors who had escaped from Yola. Over 100 people were killed and hundreds more imprisoned in what was becoming a familiar recurring pattern.

THE STATE'S RESPONSE

In the aftermath of the Maitatsine riots, President Shagari's government denied any responsibility for the violence. A few years before, during the

1981 New Year broadcast, Shagari himself had even blamed the crisis on international influences and sought to implicate as many foreigners as possible—Marwa was Cameroonian after all. He promised to open an investigation, and characterized the entire event as a criminal endeavor instead of what it truly appeared to be—religiously and politically motivated violence. The federal government's attempt to strip the episode of any religious meaning became a defining characteristic of Nigeria's leadership in its response to violent fanaticism. While this may have been a bid to avoid further interreligious discord, it also meant that the government never fully acknowledged the existing religious tensions in the country. In addition, by pointing a finger at foreign and criminal factions allegedly out to humiliate the country, Shagari and his successors continued to deny any state responsibility for the rise of violent religious groups such as Maitatsine and Boko Haram.

The Maitatsine riots also highlighted existing problems with the security forces. A reputation for brutality and extortion had already eroded relations between the security forces and the population. The evident incompetence of the Nigerian police force in the confrontation at the Shahuci playing ground further damaged its reputation. A tribunal of inquiry set up by Shagari to investigate the whole affair blamed the police and the National Security Organization for their negligence in their failure to stop Marwa from gaining such influence. The tribunal also found the Kano state government guilty of slackness with regard to the security of its people, allegedly having mishandled the situation and failed to act to check the Maitatsine. The politicians of the accused state government responded by denying all charges and returned to the political bickering with other local political parties, effectively ignoring the recommendations of the tribunal.

The involvement of foreigners in the Maitatsine riots also led to a hardening of policies toward them. A total of 185 illegal aliens were indicted at the tribunal, although "no evidence that any of the 185 foreigners even took part in the riots exists," according to Falola.[28] Nonetheless, between 1983 and 1985, illegal immigrants from ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) countries were expelled—mostly back to Niger and Chad. One thousand foreigners were deported from Kano after the 1984 Yola riot. The tribunal equally highlighted the problem of lax borders, the total absence of border patrol units, and the lack of monitoring of foreigners inside the country. This echoes quite closely

with the recruitment of foreigners by Boko Haram and the generally porous state of Nigeria's borders still today.

Falola concludes, "the Maitatsine violence revealed the depth of the country's economic crises, political instability, and the inability of the security forces to handle insurgents."[29] Walker adds that the uprising "was an example of how a charismatic preacher could harness religious zeal and turn the anger of the poor into a social movement."[30] Although an insurgency rather than a series of riots, Boko Haram's unchecked rise and gratuitous brutality between 2010 to 2015 reveals the government's failures: an inability to learn from the past, to regulate preachers, the continued incompetence of the armed forces, and the severity of the sociopolitical problems that seem to have just increased in the past 35 years.

YUSUFIYYA

Although Boko Haram inscribes itself in this pattern of violent Islamic movements in Nigeria, it is also quite different from the above-described Maitatsine, Shi'a, and Sufi groups. Boko Haram is often referred to as *Yusufiyya* due to the lasting influence of its former leader Mohammed Yusuf. Unlike Marwa, Yusuf never claimed to be a prophet, an important difference from Maitatsine and other Mahdi movements. Regardless, author Andrew Walker still defines Boko Haram as "a kind of personality cult, an Islamic millenarianist sect, inspired by a heretical, but charismatic preacher."[31] Yusuf also vilified the Shi'a for being out of religion. From early 2000, he broke away from the Izala movement, denouncing its corruption and political machinations. As mentioned previously, Izala was developed in opposition to the dominant "corrupt" Sufi movements, an approach that concurs with Yusuf's.

Yusuf adopted an interpretation of Islam that rejected modernity and the corrupting Western influences, a natural reaction to the decades of colonialism that continue to mar the country's political and economic development. He emphasized the centrality of Islam in all domains, and denounced anything that he believed distracted from God's teachings—democracy, certain books, science, casual interactions with the opposite genders, and even sport. Boko Haram however has moved away from a cultish culture focusing on the indoctrination of group members to a

totalitarian purist approach through which their interpretation of Islam is violently implemented. The group has been particularly critical of Nigeria's secular constitution and has called for the judicial implementation of a strict reading of Islamic law. This was indeed the root cause for the dispute between Yusuf and the late Izala Sheikh Jafar Adam, whom he accused of being a part of the establishment, that is, a democratically elected and un-Islamic government. In fact, Sheikh Adam had taped a sermon entitled "Western education and work for the government are not forbidden," undermining the entire foundations of Yusuf's ideology.[32]

According to French expert Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos, Boko Haram resembles more of an anti-establishment anti-colonial movement than a unique branch of Islam.[33] It has adopted a campaign of civil disobedience and confrontation with the secular government, which it expresses through attacks on symbols of the state, such as schools, the police, prisons, and critical infrastructure. Since 2010, Boko Haram has, under its new leadership, joined with terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and Al-Shabaab operating in Africa and the Middle East, thereby making use of the increasingly globalized platform available to these groups.

THE ALMAJIRI BOYS

Part of the success of radical Islamic groups is entrenched in the *almajiri* system that offers a large pool of potential recruits for charismatic preachers. *Almajiri* are boys and young men who have enrolled in traditional Koranic schools, often as an alternative to a life of poverty with parents unable to support them. The children, some as young as four, come from far and wide to live with a *mallam*, or teacher, who instructs the pupils in Islamic doctrine. Indeed, the word *almajiri* comes from Arabic and designates someone who has left his home, ostensibly in search of knowledge of Islam. When the students are not in class, they are sent out by the *mallam* to beg in the streets, a practice that has recently led to complaints of the abundance of beggars in urban centers.[34]

The religious schools offer an inexpensive opportunity for children to receive a modicum of education and relieve poor families of having to feed more mouths. Students learn to memorize and recite the Koran and write in

Arabic script, albeit living in impoverished conditions. One problem with the *almajiri* system is the lack of education and financial support of many teachers, and their dependence on charity and alms for survival. Nonetheless, many Muslims consider the *almajiri* as an important component of their religious identity. This is particularly salient in an environment where radical Islamic groups accuse state education, with its Western influences, of being sinful and therefore forbidden.

The *almajiri* system has a long history in Nigeria and was previously under the supervision of the northern emirates. The children of the elite were expected to have a sound Islamic education and invariably passed through the hands of a *mallam*.[35] With independence and the centralization of power in Abuja, the government lost interest in the *almajiri*, leading to the current state of unregulated religious schools where the *mallam* has total power over the boys. The government estimates that there are around 9 million *almajiri* children in Nigeria—of which 8.5 million are in northern Nigeria—vulnerable to recruitment by extremist terrorist groups such as Boko Haram.[36] Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka wrote that members of the militant group "were bred in madrassas and are generally known as the almajiris" although many academics view this assertion with skepticism.[37]

Critics of the *almajiri* system have pointed to the opportunity for child abuse, the derelict conditions in which the children grow up, and their vulnerability to exploitation at the hands of criminals and terrorist groups. Furthermore, students leave the schools with very little formal education and are unable to find jobs, forcing them to turn to alternative sources of income, often in the informal economy. Nonetheless jobs can be scarce in northern Nigeria, whether or not one has an education. The government has acknowledged the need to integrate the *almajiri* school system with the state's education system and has dedicated funds to building religious schools that incorporate a modern curriculum including subjects such as reading, mathematics, and science.[38] It has hit three major obstacles in this laudable campaign: first, there are not enough teachers qualified to teach in both systems; second, the population growth is far outpacing the government's attempts at reform; finally, many Muslims in traditional communities feel that their lifestyle and beliefs are threatened by Western-style education and are loath to send their children to government schools.[39]

Hannah Hoechner disagrees with this, explaining that many parents struggle to find schools that are affordable.[40] To the contrary, it is the stigmatization of *almajiri* that renders them vulnerable to radical groups willing to accept them.

The destructive presence of Boko Haram in the northeast has refueled the debate over the existence of the *almajiri*. Many commentators, including Wole Soyinka mentioned above, believe that the young boys are recruited into the sect through the *almajiri* and are forced into battle by Abu Shekau. The Nigerian press is rife with accusations that the boys are manipulated by "selfish politicians and individuals […] to achieve their selfish interests"[41] and have "become a source of embarrassment to the entire region."[42] Indeed, Hoechner finds in her field work that "many [in Nigeria] think that traditional Quranic schools supply the 'cannon fodder' for Boko Haram,"[43] although she concludes that no empirical evidence supports these claims that are based on prejudices rather than on facts. The argument that inadequate education and absence from the family nucleus breed violent youths does not only hold for the *almajiri* but extends to a great number of youths in northern Nigeria, where less than 50 percent of children are in schools. On the other hand, the scapegoating of poor children does create a social situation where they feel excluded by society and are more likely to seek acceptance among established gangs or sects such as Boko Haram.

SECULARISM AND ISLAM IN NIGERIA

The rise of radical Islamic groups in the country coincides with increasing demands from the population in northern Nigeria to implement Islamic law. Nigeria has been for all intents and purposes a secular state since independence. In view of its religiously divided society, this may have been the only option available to avoid a civil war. The constitution of the First Republic signed in 1963 proclaimed Nigeria as a secular state. This remained the case until the 1979 draft of the constitution of the Second Republic. At that time, the Muslim community fought to exclude the characteristic of Nigeria as "secular," which it perceived as contrary to its religion. In Islam, the state and its people are servants of God and must consequently be ruled by religious law. As a result, there can be no dichotomy between Islam and politics. In addition, a secular state would

contradict the democratic principles of Nigeria, seeing as Muslims, who make up a relative majority of the nation's population, have pressed for Islamic rule. This of course creates a dilemma in a country with a religiously mixed population. Finally, the 1999 constitution states that the federal and state governments "shall not adopt any religion as State Religion"[44] (Section 10) and guarantees freedom of religion to all citizens.

Notwithstanding the constitution, many Muslims in Nigeria have long demanded the implementation of sharia law in parts of the country. Prior to the 1979 constitution, sharia was a noncontentious issue included in the northern regional constitution. In Zamfara State, Islamic law was applied in approximately 75 percent of all penal cases by 1999.[45] The rejection of a secular state however went hand in hand with calls for the recognition of sharia in the Second Republic and has become a point of controversy ever since. Evidently, Nigerian Christians felt that Islamic law should not apply to them and argued that it would erode civil rights and lead the country to war, as was seen in Sudan. Many Yoruba Muslims were also hesitant about the implementation of sharia law as those who came from mixed families with a Christian parent could presumably be refused inheritance rights. The debate over sharia has characterized Nigerian politics for the past 20 years with both Christians and Muslims fearful that the government will favor the other's religion.

These fears were confirmed in 1986 when General Babangida secretly and without consultation admitted Nigeria to the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC). This "turned out to be a costly miscalculation"[46] that further polarized the country along ethnoreligious lines. The Christian population, terrified that it meant the political Islamization of Nigeria, demanded immediate withdrawal from the organization. Meanwhile, Muslims celebrated this "step forward" and united in the defense of their membership in the OIC. The government eventually compromised, remaining a member of the organization but refraining from participating actively, leaving everyone effectively dissatisfied. Ironically, although the government always sends a delegation to OIC meetings, Christian President Goodluck Jonathan was the first Nigerian head of state to personally attend an OIC summit in 2013.[47]

During the transition to democracy in 1999, religion resurfaced as a critical political issue. This is partly a result of the power shift to the

Christian south via the presidency of Olusegun Obasanjo and later Goodluck Jonathan. Ironically, the issue of sharia was largely ignored by the major candidates in the 1999 presidential elections. The new constitution did make provisions for Islamic law in family matters, subject to the acquiescence of all parties concerned, but it was only later, in the newly empowered parliaments, that states in northern Nigeria introduced the Islamic penal code and other sharia laws.

The first state to introduce strict Islamic law was Zamfara State, where Governor Ahmed Sani was elected on a sharia ticket. A former henchman of General Babangida, he refashioned himself as a proponent of Islamic law for "self-serving reasons"[48] and subsequently pushed for full sharia law across the state. In view of his political success, other state governors followed suit, primarily as a "means to advance their political careers."[49] According to Johannes Harnischfeger, although the sharia campaign was launched for political reasons, it was driven by genuine religious beliefs, a fear of Christian domination, and a profound distrust of the elected government. The introduction of sharia law in 12 states of northern Nigeria —Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara—has been duly criticized by Muslims and Christians alike. The secular central government has severely limited the actual implementation of the law, and corrupt leaders have further abused its partial application. In fact, the authorities in Zamfara have been accused of forceful acquisition of land and properties from the less privileged while "hiding behind a façade of Muslim piety."[50]

Furthermore, while sharia was endorsed in Zamfara with little protest—its population is 90 percent Muslims—the policy caused riots in states with large Christian minorities. Kaduna was particularly affected by religious violence. In February 2000, the Christian Association of Nigeria organized public protests to voice its displeasure with the new policies. The protestors clashed with Muslim youths, triggering a spiral of violence in which at least 1,200 people were killed, with more buried, unidentified.[51] Christians in the southeast of the country began massacring the Muslim minority population in revenge for the killings of Christians in Kaduna. The governor of Kaduna responded by modifying the laws so as to exclude Christians from certain restrictions, and strict punishments such as stoning and amputation provided for in the penal code were not implemented in the state. This

satisfied nobody: Christians accused the governor of pandering to Islamic extremism; meanwhile the Muslim community has nicknamed him "Pastor Makarfi" for pandering to the Christians and criticized him vehemently for betraying them.

President Obasanjo responded to the interreligious violence by inviting the governors of northern states to Abuja, in hope that they could be persuaded to abandon the implementation of sharia in their respective jurisdictions. His adviser and former army leader, Brigadier Benjamin Adekunle, allegedly suggested that Governor Sani be removed from his position in Zamfara as an example to the others and encouraged the president to declare a state of emergency. Obasanjo however opted to let the sharia campaign run its course and declined to suspend constitutional freedoms. The government's passivity sent a signal that internecine violence would not draw a strong military reaction, and further religious riots ensued in other cities and again in Kaduna in 2002.

For example, in an article printed in the newspaper *ThisDay*, journalist Isioma Daniel suggested that the Prophet would have approved of the controversial Miss World contest, which was to take place in Nigeria in December 2002. This caused an outrage among the Muslim community who went into the street in what was, initially, a peaceful demonstration in Kaduna. However, a group of young men decided to burn down the newspaper's regional office. Violence erupted the following day, when another group of Muslim youth armed to the teeth began targeting Christians in mixed communities in what appeared to be preplanned attacks.[52] Christians responded in kind, triggering a cycle of violence that resulted in 250 deaths, the displacement of 20,000–30,000 people, and the destruction of several churches and mosques within three days of fighting.[53] The chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria accused the government of allowing Muslims to attack Christians and warned that "we are law abiding citizens and we expect the government to protect us; but if the government at various levels fail to protect us, our people will be left with no option but to defend and protect themselves by whatever means available to them."[54]

All in all, the sharia riots claimed the lives of 5,000 people in Kaduna, Kano, and Jos,[55] and the issue is far from over. The minority Christian population in the north has resigned itself to living in a region governed by

sharia law. Yet the introduction of sharia law seems to have irritated the Muslim community even more. For many devout Muslims, sharia needs to be strictly implemented as per the spirit of the laws, and the watered-down version perceived as a betrayal of the Muslim *Ummah* (community) displeases many in Nigeria. In fact, a number of Muslims were embittered by what they saw as Christians deliberately resisting the implementation of sharia, against the wishes of the religious majority in the north. Leaders such as Ibrahim al-Zakzaky accused politicians of intentionally setting the policy up for failure and argued that the "pious campaign was a farce"[56] as long as the Christian hold on power was not broken. This view coincides with Mohammed Yusuf's allegations that sharia law is not properly implemented anywhere in Nigeria in part due to the corruption of the political system and the collaboration or treason of select religious leaders. Boko Haram has also justified its jihad by pointing at the incomplete implementation of sharia in the north.[57] Abu Qaqa, a Boko Haram spokesperson, said in 2012 that "the secular state is responsible for the woes we are seeing today. People should understand that we are not saying we have to rule Nigeria, but we have been motivated by the stark injustice in the land." His solution evidently was to "bring Sharia to the whole world, not just Nigeria."[58]

Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria predates the Maitatsine and Boko Haram violence and the introduction of sharia law. Sects such as Izala and the Shiite are considered as extremist groups due to their opposition to the state, their aggressive evangelization, and their clashes with other religious groups. Indeed, the objective of purifying Islam and the state can only be attained at a high cost to society, and is by definition uncompromising. As such, author Isaac Albert argues that the above-mentioned religious militant groups are in fact insurgents or political adventurists who are fighting for the political power necessary to achieve their reformation of society.[59]

THE LEGACY OF THE CALIPHATE

In August 2014, the leader of Boko Haram, Abu Shekau, declared the establishment of an Islamic state in the northeast of Nigeria. The statement followed considerable territorial gains by the insurgency, including the town of Gwoza in Borno State. Boko Haram quickly imposed its interpretation of

Islamic law on the 50,000-strong town. While Gwoza and its surroundings had been attacked previously, this was the first time that Shekau made clear his intention to rule the region, thereby directly threatening the integrity of the Nigerian state.

Boko Haram's dreams of an Islamic state appear at first glance to fit within the wider pattern of Islamic rule in Africa. Many Muslim states in history have claimed to be caliphates, ruled by a caliph who is supposedly a direct descendent of the Prophet Muhammad. The word *ḵalīfa* in Arabic means "representative" and is used to designate the deputy of God or the successor of the Prophet. A unified caliphate encompassing all Muslims continues to remain a political dream. This ambition is generally inspired by nostalgia for the great Umayyad Caliphate, a perceived Golden Age of Islam with a territory that extended beyond 15 million square kilometers at its peak and remains one of the largest empires ever seen.[60] Aspirations of a return to political and cultural greatness continue to transpire among some groups within the Muslim community, in a world that is economically biased in favor of the Western Judeo-Christian population.

An African caliphate emerged in Sokoto, Nigeria, in the 19th century. This political institution was built on a war of expansion led by Sheikh Usman dan Fodio, who later became the first caliph of Sokoto. The caliphate stretched over 1,500 km, including parts of Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and northern Yorubaland. At the time, it was Africa's largest independent state and implemented Islamic law throughout the territory. During the colonial period, the British ruled Sokoto indirectly and treated it as one of the many emirates in the north. The sultan of Sokoto, as successor and descendent of Usman dan Fodio, continued to be regarded as an important spiritual leader and still exercises influence among the Muslim community today. The sultan is also the leader of the Qadiriyya Sufi order, which Boko Haram has sworn to eradicate.

Nonetheless, both Mohammed Yusuf and Abu Shekau have referred to Usman dan Fodio's Sokoto Caliphate. Yusuf allegedly "spoke of returning the lands […] to what he perceived as their former Islamic glory" although dan Fodio "did not seem to feature prominently in his sermons" according to author Mike Smith.[61] Smith further explains that the leaders of Boko Haram "occasionally paid lip service to Dan Fodio's caliphate" but mostly as part of a political rhetoric that would appeal to his many admirers.[62] Splinter group Ansaru has also publicly claimed its goal to "restore the

dignity of Usman dan Fodio" but derided Abu Shekau for targeting fellow Muslims.[63] Boko Haram frames the socioeconomic and ethnoreligious grievances of Muslims as a religious malaise that will only be resolved with the establishment of an Islamic state and the full implementation of sharia law, thereby justifying its military tactics.

In the last two years, Boko Haram has found inspiration in the successful jihad led by the Islamic State/ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Despite previously aligning with its competitor Al Qaeda and forging close ties with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, in March 2015, Abu Shekau declared his admiration for and allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State/ISIS.[64] The Islamic State/ISIS subsequently released a video in which it claimed Boko Haram was now the Islamic State's West Africa Province.[65] This apparent alliance implies global aspirations for an Islamic state that is reminiscent in theory, if not in practice, of the great Muslim caliphates in history.

INTERNECINE VIOLENCE IN KANO AND JOS

In addition to the recent rise in violence in the northeast of Nigeria, Muslim–Christian relations have been contentious throughout the country at different periods. The Biafra war was portrayed by some as a religious conflict between the Christian Igbos and the Muslim political elite rather than as a war of secession.[66] Plateau State also has the highest number of internally displaced people in Nigeria as a direct result of internecine violence. And the state of Kaduna has been the scene of serious outbreaks of violence between the mixed Christian and Muslim communities, particularly in the 1980s and again in 2000s. Resource competition has been behind much of the communal violence in Nigeria since its independence. Falola explains that "in the politics of resource distribution, ethnicity has compounded the religious divide to generate intense struggles over how regions and areas will divide national wealth."[67]

Plateau State and other parts of Nigeria's "Middle Belt" have recently been plagued with intercommunal violence. The Middle Belt is a fertile region in the centre of Nigeria and has attracted farmers and herders from all religious communities, making it one of the most heterogeneous areas in the country. Tin mining in the capital Jos attracted a large number of

immigrants during colonial times. While the Muslim Hausa were the most numerous, they overlapped with local Berom tribes who are primarily Christian and are awarded "indigene" status by the state, which gives them privileged access to political power. This has invariably led to competition for resources and land between the different groups and resulted in intercommunal violence in Jos and surrounding villages.

Religious riots in 1999, 2001, 2008, 2010, and 2013 killed thousands of people. A report published by IRIN in 2004 claimed "more than 53,000 people were killed (and a further 280,000 displaced) during three years of sectarian violence that engulfed Plateau State in central Nigeria"—although other organizations have set the number closer to 10,000.[68] The murder of hundreds of Muslims by Christian militias in May 2004 prompted President Obasanjo to declare a state of emergency in Plateau. The Council of Foreign Relations stated that an additional 785 people were killed between May 2011 and June 2013, suggesting that the government had failed to address the problems that contribute to the ongoing conflict.

The cyclical nature of the violence corresponds to a large extent to environmental changes in Nigeria. As a result of desertification, Muslim Fulani herdsmen have been moving south in search of pasture for their livestock, infringing on the land used by indigenous farmers in the region. According to reports in the local press, much of the violence is triggered by accusations of cattle theft or destruction of crops; both are direct attacks to the precarious livelihoods of the mostly Christian inhabitants. In addition, the killings are often carried out using basic weapons rather than guns, and are said to "have a ghastly, almost ritualistic quality."[69] Because the farmers and settlers practice different religions as a result of colonialism and migration, the ethnic violence has taken on a religious overtone. Unscrupulous politicians who have manipulated the discourse and appealed to religious affiliates to avenge their fellow believers under attack in other parts of the country have helped escalate the crisis. The introduction of sharia law in the north adds fuel to the conflict because Christians in the Middle Belt perceive it as a direct threat and an indication of Muslim ambitions for the whole country.[70] The discrimination against Christians in northern Nigeria has impelled the indigenes to hold on to their privileges in the Middle Belt and exclude the Muslims from power and property by any possible means.

Trust between the Christian and Muslim communities in Nigeria has been seriously eroded by the religious violence throughout the country. While much attention has been focused on the northeast recently, clashes in the Middle Belt have resulted in more deaths and displacements of Nigerians than the war waged by Boko Haram. Even though the killings in Kano, Jos, and surrounding areas have not been directed at the state, Abuja's inability and unwillingness to address the endemic violence over the last decade has also contributed to discrediting the government. The international press has neglected to report on the events in the Middle Belt, arguably because it is perceived as a local problem with little risk of spilling over international borders. Nonetheless, the religious/communal violence in Jos is part of a wider problem that continues to threaten Muslim–Christian relations in Nigeria.

POWER AND RELIGION

Both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria view their government and security forces with suspicion. Religious groups have nonetheless encouraged their members to be politically active in an effort to influence policies. The growing influence of religion in the political sphere has led to a cycle of politico-religious campaigns across the country and over every issue. Muslim leaders promised Islamization and sharia, while Christian politicians guaranteed secularism in Nigeria.

Religion has therefore become entrenched in Nigerian politics, with leaders playing the faith card to garner votes and political office. Any attempt by local leaders to address matters, such as education, considered within the sphere of influence of one or another religion is met with the threat of mass riots and violence. The government on the other hand seeks to downplay the role of religion in these clashes and, while condemning the violence, repeatedly accuses different factions of trying to topple the regime. This is not an easy task in view of the prevalence of overtly religious tensions in the country. Bibles and Korans were burned in the 1980s in clashes between the religious groups, and churches were demolished if it emerged they were in a Muslim-dominated residential area. And in 1985, an incident between Muslims and Christians over the presence of a cross on campus nearly led to riots at the University of Ibadan. Following the religious clashes in Kafanchan, Kaduna, in 1987, General

Babangida pointed the finger at "a group of ambitious and mindless power-seekers (seeking) to push us into yet another civil war."[71] Fanatics were often blamed too for instigating violence. The poor economic conditions and their impact on radicalism, however, were never explored nor addressed by the powers that be.

Radical religious leaders have also recognized the potency of political office, and many have sought to instate their allies in positions of power or bribe officials to support their views. Mohammed Yusuf, for instance, supported the governorship of Ali Modu Sheriff in the 2003 elections, in hope that he would push for the implementation of sharia law throughout Borno State. Sheriff did create a ministry of religious affairs to which he appointed an ally of Yusuf, but little more. Yusuf and his followers felt betrayed by Sheriff, as did many other religious groups that supported a political candidate, only to be left on the margins after the elections. The highest stake of course was the presidency, which continues to stratify the country between north and south, Muslims and Christians. The recent election of a Muslim and pro-sharia president,[72] however, has done little to pacify radical groups such as Boko Haram, as evidenced in the ongoing attacks in the northeast of the country. This supports the thesis that the militants are determined to continue their insurgency regardless of the regime in place, convinced that their objective—including the overthrow of a perceived secular or irreligious state—can only be achieved through violent means.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: GOVERNANCE, RELIGION AND THE RISE OF RADICAL GROUPS

Nigeria has a history of religious violence and radical groups with a political agenda. Since independence in 1960, Christians and Muslims have been at odds to define the role of religion in governance, with both sides defending their right to religious freedom and the implementation of religious laws. In addition, unscrupulous politicians have exploited this vulnerability to gain power over their adversaries, using inflammatory language and inciting violence against the different communities. Unfortunately, the Nigerian government has often failed to hold such people accountable of hate crimes and looks unlikely to do so in the near future. Downplaying potential threats such as the emergence of extremist groups,

even in isolated areas, allows them to fester and become serious problems. Instead, the government continues to deflect accusations of corruption and mismanagement by scapegoating foreigners and attacking radical groups such as Maitatsine and Boko Haram. The government seems to always underestimate violent nonstate actors, not only the two previously mentioned but also the Niger Delta militants who were able to operate unhindered until the problem became too big to ignore.

Although radical Islamist groups have effectively become a threat to the stability and security of the country, they are neither purely motivated by religious fervor nor are they simply manipulated by ambitious politicians. The poor socioeconomic conditions of the country and a lack of faith in the government, the security forces, and their fellow countrymen have created an environment propitious to violence of any kind as the social contract disintegrates. Religion has therefore become a convenient vehicle for mobilizing and voicing discontent. The highly stratified religious communities, somewhat divided geographically within the north and the south, have facilitated this process of identification along socioreligious lines. An effective rivalry between religious communities for power and the presidency has become integrated in Nigerian politics, further entrenching the problem for the future.

Boko Haram started off, like many other radical groups in Nigeria, as a small, localized sect with little power or influence. Its successful transformation into a regional and arguably international threat is partially the result of its ability to capitalize on existing religious rivalries. The government's manner of dealing with the Maitatsine rebellion and the track record of police brutality have fed right into the discourse of religious victimhood that is propagated by Yusuf and Shekau. The "success" with which the rebellion was put down also averted any further introspection or considerations for nonmilitary strategies for countering insurgencies and religious extremism.

With a large pool of impoverished youth from which to recruit and a powerful political grievance backed by legitimate religious beliefs, Boko Haram has managed to expand in the northeast of Nigeria and take advantage of the government's relative disinterest in the economically "backward" part of the country. It has proven to be opportunistic and resilient, strategically adapting to the political and security context in the region. Recently, Boko Haram has established itself with international

terrorist groups in Africa and the Middle East, thereby increasing its striking power and its access to weaponry and recruits. Goodluck Jonathan, during his second term, sought to position Boko Haram as an international threat and gain support from the West, but the successful rise of the Islamist group in Nigeria is most likely the result of severe domestic grievances than part of an international Islamist agenda.

On a final note, this chapter has highlighted the difficulties of governing, let alone managing a state in which two roughly equal groups vie for political influence and economic prosperity. Nigeria's strategy to remain secular aspires to control the inevitable religious tensions that often ensue in mixed communities. The implementation of sharia law in the north conflicts with the spirit of the constitution and has inflamed the non-Muslim population, leading to halfhearted policies that please no one.

CHAPTER 3

The "Making of" Boko Haram

The violent sectarian group popularly known as Boko Haram had its first encounter with the Nigerian security forces in 2004 over the fishing rights of a pond in Kanama, Yobe State. This was five years before it erupted onto the national scene, when Mohammed Yusuf called for his followers to rise up against the government, shortly before his assassination. Ten years later, Boko Haram had become a serious threat to the stability of Nigeria, to the legitimacy of Goodluck Jonathan's presidency, and to the democratic aspirations of the country.

How was this virtually unknown extremist group able to grow to such proportions? Was it the continuation of a long tradition of sectarian and separatist groups in Nigeria? Or was it a manifestation of deeper grievances reflecting the disparities between the poorer Muslim north and the relatively more affluent Christian south? Alternatively, is this just another threat from a global jihadist movement that epitomizes an inevitable clash of civilizations?

This chapter explores the "making of" Boko Haram, threading through its emergence in 2002 as a local sectarian group known as the Yobe Taliban, its mutation into a politically astute organization, and its eventual militarization under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau. It explains the endogenous development of Boko Haram, providing a detailed analysis of the composition and evolution of the group over 13 years. This evolution has increasingly been punctuated by violent activity in the northeast of Nigeria.

THE BIRTH OF BOKO HARAM

Originally, Boko Haram was just another group made up of nonviolent young Muslims with radical beliefs. In 1995, three Islamic organizations from the University of Maiduguri—the Islamic Da'wah Group; Ahlulsunna wal' jamaah hijra or Muslim Youth Organization; and Izala—merged into a single group.[1] They began congregating at the Muhammadu Indimi Mosque in Maiduguri. At the time, Boko Haram was one among dozens of Salafi and radical movements, which have been politically active in northern Nigeria since at least the 1980s. The situation changed in 2002 when Muhammad Ali, the leader of the group, declared the state corrupt and irredeemable. Ali, likely a nom de guerre, was possibly radicalized in Saudi Arabia and is believed to have fought in Afghanistan with the mujahideen.[2] Like other figures later associated with Boko Haram, such as Yusuf and Abu Shekau, Ali would challenge the establishment's interpretation of Islam in northeast Nigeria. Not only was this interpretation deviating from sharia, but also it was, to this more radical set of thinkers, nonpuritanical and perhaps even innovative or heretic (*Bid'ah*). It is for such reasons that Ali dismissed the politico-Islamism practiced in Borno and moved his congregation to a remote camp in Kanama, where his followers set about digging trenches and building defenses against the inevitable battle with the authorities.

This move coincided with the presidency of former general Olusegun Obasanjo, a period characterized by corruption to the extent to which Nigeria was classified second to last out of 102 countries surveyed in the 2002 Corruption Perceptions Index.[3] Muhammad Ali's disillusion with both national and local politics at the time was likely reflected widely in Nigerian society and particularly in the Muslim north, where the population felt alienated from a Christian government that represented the wealthy south and seemed to ignore the rest of the country. Ali likened this move to the Prophet's *hijra*, the withdrawal from Mecca to Medina. During this retreat, the Prophet was able to assemble his followers and prepare the first raids against Mecca.

Muhammad Ali's ideology proved popular around Kanama, drawing on the support of a largely poor rural community and of migrants from nearby Niger. Some local residents, however, viewed the group as a threat to the community. A handful of children of renowned politicians and financiers

from Yobe and Borno[4] had joined the movement, and "terrorised the inhabitants of Damaturu […], and Damboa, Bama, and Gwoza in neighbouring Borno State, attacking police stations and attempting prison breaks."[5] They were referred to as the "Nigerian" or "Yobe Taliban" for their extremist dogma[6] and were refused access to the local fishing pond. This led the group to its first encounters with the police and eventually the armed forces who, in January 2004, besieged Muhammad Ali's settlement and killed him along with approximately 200 followers. This arguably excessive display of violence was characteristic of a pattern of abuses by security forces, which over time serves to further strain the social contract between the citizen and the state. Before his death, Muhammad Ali ominously warned that his group would bounce back and become a *Kahin wuya*, or a "bone stuck in the throat."[7] Survivors of the raid went back to Maiduguri under the new leadership of Mohammed Yusuf, who returned from self-imposed exile in Saudi Arabia in 2005. Although Yusuf had not been a prominent member of the Kanama group, he appeared to espouse its main ideology and grabbed the opportunity to create a support base around his increasingly radical sermons.

THE PROSELYTIZING YEARS

Mohammed Yusuf was a former follower of the respected Islamic scholar Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam,[8] and had a much more defined ideology than Muhammad Ali. Yusuf was born in Yobe State in approximately 1970 and grew up an *almajiri*, begging on the streets for food as a youth. He married four wives and fathered 12 children in his lifetime and lived lavishly, thanks to his family connections.[9] According to one source, he had 20 jeeps, a Mercedes,[10] and a number of farms at the time of his death. After the 2004 raids, he set about developing a community of supporters around his mosque known as Ibn Tiamiyyah Masjid. His father-in-law, a political figure in Borno who supported the movement, donated the land on which the mosque was built. Yusuf's powerful family connections have warranted comparisons to Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden who came from a rich Saudi family and who led a campaign of terror and hate.[11] Mohammed Yusuf's organization was originally called the Yusufiyya Islamic Movement after its leader. It eventually was renamed *Jama'atul*

Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad, loosely translated into "Brethren United in the Pursuit of Holy War," to transcend the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf. The organization is still sometimes referred to as Yusufiyya. Author Ikechukwu Ikerionwu characterizes the group as "a kind of personality cult held together by the reverence its members have for the group's [original] leader, Mohammed Yusuf."[12] Indeed, Yusuf was a charismatic leader, with the title of *Ustaz* that made him a qualified Islamic scholar and gave him the authority to preach. His open-air sermons were recorded and distributed widely, and he granted a number of press interviews, which revealed his religious teachings.

Mohammed Yusuf's interpretation of Islam revolves around Allah as the direct creator, discarding science as a Western misconstruction that distances the individual from the teachings of the Prophet. In *Hazihi Aqeedatun wa Minhaju Da'awatuna*,[13] the only book he ever published, Mohammed Yusuf rejects all institutions derived from secularism rather than sharia law, including democracy and partisan politics. The rejection of democracy, according to Kyari Mohammed, is consistent with the Saudi influence, where Western political ideas are perceived to be a threat to the monarchy, and are therefore decidedly subversive.[14]

Mohammed Yusuf perceived his movement as a continuation of the jihad led by respected Islamic teacher and founder of the Sokoto Caliphate Usman dan Fodio, who rejected the penetration of traditional African practices into Islam. This is also in line with the teachings of Ibn Taymiyyah after whom Yusuf named his mosque. Taymiyyah was a firebrand Sunni Islamic jurist from Syria who strove to maintain Islam's adherence to sharia law during the time of the Mongol invasions in the 13th century. At the beginning of his career, he called for Muslims to (violently) revolt against apostate rulers and implement an Islamic state. Yusuf drew selectively from Taymiyyah's early ideology, which was significantly more antiestablishment and violent than his later thinking. He laid the blame for the rampant corruption in Nigeria, especially among the emirs and traditional elders, on foreign influences and declared Western education *Haram*, or forbidden. The negative perception of Western education is tied to the impact of asymmetric colonialism and the British influence in the country, which is developed further in the next chapters. Overtime, *boko*, meaning "sham, fraudulent or misleading" came to designate all foreign

education,[15] and Yusuf's repeated statements that foreign-influenced education was *Haram* led to the group's nickname *Boko Haram* by the press in 2005. This nickname has been rejected by the sect and is not an accurate reflection of its political agenda or philosophy.

Yusuf's teachings attracted a strong following and included members of wealthy and politically influential families and from among the disaffected youth of northern Nigeria. Drawing from the tradition of "missionary Islam," Yusuf set about providing services where the government failed to do so. This included food and shelter and facilitating marriages for members of the group. He quickly built a cohesive social group around him, and by 2008, the sect was operating like "a state within a state," with a Suha council and a religious police implementing decisions.[16] Members shared a common aim to rid Nigeria of a corrupt and abusive government that had evidently failed its people, and return the country to a state of religious purity.[17] The mosque's social practices, a typical welfare strategy employed by many aspiring organizations, guaranteed the expansion of the group's reach, which soon included a number of refugees from nearby Chad.

POLITICIZATION AND ELITE SUPPORT

Whereas it appears that Muhammad Ali's brand of Islam was mostly religious (with some significant political criticism), Mohammed Yusuf deliberately built political ties and developed strong connections with the government in Borno. This was largely facilitated by the involvement of his father-in-law, Babbafugu Muhammad, who was a wealthy and influential figure in Borno. Fugu was not, however, a member of Boko Haram, although this did not stop his disappearance, presumably at the hands of the police.[18] His son Babakura Fugu subsequently attempted to broker peace talks between the group and the federal government before being killed in 2011—a crime for which Boko Haram has claimed responsibility.

Initially, Mohammed Yusuf portrayed his organization as a religious community that wished to practice its faith without political interference. On this basis, he set about raising funds from the Nigerian elite and abroad. Although Yusuf was suspected of receiving money from some Saudi Salafists following his two hajj trips in 2004 and 2005, the courts in Abuja were never able to prove it.[19] There are indications that the organization

received financial support from individuals in Libya and Algeria, to assist with the missions of "Islamic propagation and Jihad" espoused by Boko Haram. The group would further develop its international connections in 2011, under its new leadership and after the rise of global Islamist terrorism changed the operating environment.

In Nigeria, according to Toyin Falola who wrote well before Boko Haram became a national problem, "religion is used by the power-hungry as a stepping-stone to power and political legitimacy"[20] and has historically been a source not only of violence but also of revenue. The 2003 gubernatorial elections were particularly important for Boko Haram as competing politicians in Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, and Yobe employed and armed them to intimidate voters and opponents. For instance, Ali Modu Sheriff, a former governor of Borno State, has repeatedly been accused of financially supporting the group in order to further his own political objectives, including using its members as his private army. Fieldwork supported claims that Sheriff made a deal with Yusuf and his followers in 2003 to ensure his gubernatorial election and promised the implementation of sharia law in exchange for ensuring his victory. He also appointed a Boko Haram member, Alhaji Buji Foi, as minister of religious affairs in Borno State, extending the political reach of the organization, and released another member who had been imprisoned for armed robbery. Sheriff eventually had a falling out with Yusuf over his failure to uphold his promise to fully implement sharia law.

Governors in neighboring Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe, Niger, Kano, and Katsina states have also come under scrutiny for allegedly providing the organization with a monthly subvention, with figures ranging from 5 million to 10 million naira per month. This is equivalent to a stipend of $35,000 to $70,000, a small fortune in northern Nigeria. Indeed, a 2013 report published by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) stated that "Boko Haram receives most of its funding from membership dues and donations from sympathizers within and outside the country."[21] No politician or businessman has been legally connected to Boko Haram, however, as evidenced by the release of Mallam Muhammad Ashafa who had been accused of funding Al Qaeda supporters. Another indication of Yusuf's strong political ties was his prompt release from jail each time he was arrested by the police and security forces as far back as 2002—a topic he allegedly joked about.[22] In the latter case, Yusuf was

charged with terrorism before the federal high court in Abuja but was released following the alleged intervention of four influential Nigerians from the People's Democratic Party. This has fueled rumors that southern Christians whose goal was to undermine the stability of the north encouraged Yusuf to destabilize the region.[23]

In a country with historically strong ties between the political and the military institutions, it is only normal that the army would also be implicated in the affair. In the same report in which a questionable Australian negotiator, Stephen Davies, made allegations about Sheriff's involvement, he also accused former chief of army staff General Azubuike Ihejirika of sponsoring Boko Haram, specifically by procuring weapons for the group. It is widely assumed that the Joint Task Force (JTF) was an army appendage and therefore under the general. However, JTF Operation Restore Order fell under defense headquarters and therefore outside the remit of the army. This distinction is important to clarify the degree of oversight that General Ihejirika actually had over the JTF, which was negligible. The general's involvement with the sect is widely viewed with skepticism in the Nigerian media. Regardless of Ihejirika's actual role, the Nigerian Army continues to play a part in the country's politics, with some individuals rumored to support a movement that would undermine the president's credibility.

Certainly much of Boko Haram's financial support came at a time of political turmoil in the country. General Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba, was elected as president in 1999 under a power-sharing "zoning" deal in which he promised the elites in the north that he would leave the presidency at the end of a single four-year term. Contrary to the agreement, however, he ran for office again in 2003, ruling the country until 2007. It was during this time that Yusuf consolidated his position, increasing his power base among political leaders who principally opposed Obasanjo. A security report claimed that support for Yusuf at the time of his death in 2009 exceeded one million followers, each of whom was expected to pay a daily levy of 100 naira ($0.50) to the leader. According to a more reliable source, however, numbers of Boko Haram members during Yusuf's lifetime range between 4,000 and 10,000 people.[24]

Despite the politicization of Yusuf's sect, the group never established a political manifesto and had few overlying principles other than a general rejection of the Nigerian state and an aspiration to establish a pure form of

sharia throughout the territory. According to Nigerian commentator Tajudeen Suleiman, Mohammed Yusuf was originally opposed to violence, arguing that it stood against the teachings of Islam and that his ideal state could be achieved purely through proselytizing.[25] It was his deputy, Abubakar Shekau, who pushed for a more militaristic approach in the ideological campaign.[26] Author Andrew Walker disagrees, however, who quotes from his lectures as early as 2006 in which Yusuf encouraged the use of violence and jihad.[27]

THE MILITARIZATION OF THE SECT

In its early days, Boko Haram operated locally and did not present a significant threat to the Nigerian or local governments. Compared to the political and economic havoc that the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta was causing in the Niger Delta, the north was not high on the priority list of the Nigerian security forces. It was only after the 2004 military and police assault on Muhammad Ali's group in Kanama that Boko Haram members began a series of low-intensity revenge attacks against the security forces. They targeted police stations to kill security officials and steal their weapons, broke into prisons to release militants, and assassinated a number of political and religious figures, such as Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam, who represented the "corruption" of the state and spoke out against them. This assassination was also a turning point for Shekau, who used the opportunity to step out of his mentor's shadow. Boko Haram did not particularly target Christians under Muhammad Ali's leadership, and there is no record of any reference to killing non-Muslims in Yusuf's book or in his sermons.

Naturally, the Nigerian security forces responded to the increase in violence and in 2005 set up a police squad named Operation Flush to combat political thugs and robbers. The poorly trained security forces attempted to enforce crash helmet laws and restrictions on the movement of motorcycles at night. This increasingly brought them into confrontations with Boko Haram members who tended to ignore local authority, particularly where the police were concerned. According to some sources, the motorcycle laws were specifically implemented in Yobe to curtail the activities of sect members, who would drive around town and shoot at the

police forces. The turning point came in June 2009 following a violent encounter between security officials and some members of Boko Haram.

According to the prevailing narrative, a number of Boko Haram adherents were on their way to Gwange cemetery to bury four members who had died in an automobile accident when they were stopped by a patrol team for Operation Flush. This team was a special force tasked with fighting armed robbery and violent crime in Maiduguri but was not responsible for implementing the new law requiring that all bikers wear crash helmets—although they were causing public disorder. In any case, the sect members objected to the interruption of their funeral procession and resisted arrest, providing the security forces with the opportunity to escalate the use of force. The Operation Flush officers opened fire and injured 17 Boko Haram members. Other members were then allegedly refused access to their wounded in the hospital, exacerbating the situation.

In his Friday sermon following the altercation, Mohammed Yusuf vowed that his group would retaliate against the security agency of the state, accusing the police of creating an excuse to kill his followers. This triggered a tit-for-tat series of attacks between Boko Haram and the security forces in Borno and surrounding states, which lasted less than a month. On July 21, 2009, nine Boko Haram members were arrested in Biu Local Government Area (LGA) for planning an attack on the Federal Road Safety Corps and charged with illegal possession of ammunition. In return, Boko Haram attacked the Dutsen Tanshi police station in Bauchi State, with 51 people killed in the assault. The sect members increased their tempo of attacks in the following days, and on July 27, 2009, they stormed a prison in Borno State, killing wardens and releasing prisoners; they also attacked the police headquarters in Maiduguri and in Wudil, Kano State. Several police stations in Potiskum, Yobe State, were also hit, demonstrating that Boko Haram really was targeting the security forces as part of a wider struggle with the state at the time rather than carrying out a sectarian war inside the country.

This triggered the intervention of the Nigerian Army under its Military Assistance to the Civil Power mandate, which on July 28 moved into Maiduguri with six armored war tanks and hundreds of soldiers. Within 48 hours, the army had killed 800 Boko Haram members and arrested hundreds of others, including Mohammed Yusuf, who was captured hiding in a goat pen on the residence of his father-in-law. The Ibn Tiamiyyah

Masjid mosque and Yusuf's compound were razed to the ground by the security forces. Hours after his arrest, the Nigerian police announced that Yusuf had been shot trying to escape custody and released two videos, one showing the sectarian leaders making a confession and the second revealing his bullet-riddled body.[28] According to some sources, the policemen had emptied their entire magazines into his corpse.[29] The news of Mohammed Yusuf's death, however, caused an outcry in Nigeria and among activist and human rights groups. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch accused the police of extrajudicial killing and demanded an investigation.

It is widely believed that the police killed Yusuf after he made the confession to get rid of the "nuisance" preacher and possibly because he could have revealed the names of some influential Nigerians who had financed his group. Some local sources also attribute the deaths of Buji Foi, the former commissioner of religious affairs, and of Baba Fugu Muhammad to the police—although Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for the latter. The extrajudicial killing turned Yusuf into a martyr, as he became a symbol of the excessive police and military brutality. This state of affairs united both surviving Boko Haram members and the civilians in an ideological and military campaign against Nigeria's brutal security forces.

THE RULE OF ABU SHEKAU

Following Yusuf's death, the group retreated for about a year, during which time it adopted his deputy, Abubakar (Abu) Shekau, as its new spiritual leader and reviewed its strategy. Abubakar Shekau is presumed to be slightly older (estimates range between 34 and 43)[30] than Yusuf. He may have married one of Yusuf's wives and adopted his children. Ethnically, Shekau is like Yusuf, a Kanuri—the modern-day descendants of the once vast Kanem-Bornu Empire that spanned across northern Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Along with the Hausa–Fulani and other foreign elements, they make up the bulk of Boko Haram's foot soldiers. After the 2009 crackdown, it was presumed that Shekau had been killed or at least shot in the leg and forced into hiding. This period coincides with the organization's inactivity and lack of organized leadership, despite several claims from various individuals that they had taken up the reins.

Under Shekau's leadership, Boko Haram developed a relatively sophisticated media campaign. It distributed videos and leaflets that capitalized on Yusuf's martyrdom, mobilized and radicalized members, and declared war on the secular enemies of the sect. These enemies included security personnel, religious leaders, churches and mosques, politicians, and telecommunications facilities; all would become the prime targets of Boko Haram's wrath over the next five years. Within 18 months, the group was using tactics such as targeted assassinations, drive-by shootings, suicide bombings, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). It also extended its operations across the northern states and down into the central plateau.

Abu Shekau released a video in June 2010 announcing his leadership of Boko Haram and urging followers to carry out attacks against the Nigerian security forces and other traitors, but asking for civilians to be spared.[31] Following this announcement, there was an increase in drive-by shootings targeting police forces in Damaturu and Maiduguri, with assailants approaching on motorcycles and taking their victims by surprise. The pattern of operations mirrored the tactics used by Boko Haram during Yusuf's leadership, fueling rumors that the group had effectively rearmed. Then in September 2010, a group of 50 men armed with machine guns broke into a prison in Bauchi and released 700 inmates, 150 of which were suspected Boko Haram members.[32] This attack revealed the new operational capability of the organization and subsequently highlighted its potential threat to security in Nigeria.

Shekau's group began targeting political figures and critical clerics, with the assassination of the speaker of the Borno State House of Assembly and the national vice chairman of the All Nigeria Peoples Party in their respective homes in October 2010. Most of the violence in 2010 remained around Maiduguri though. The bombings of Christian churches during the 2010 Christmas Eve services in Jos and Maiduguri signaled a new strategy for the group and served as an early indication of the imminent sectarian conflict. Although sectarian violence had previously erupted between the various religious communities in Jos, this was the first time that bombs were actually used against churches, an act for which Boko Haram claimed responsibility.[33]

The year 2011 was arguably a turning point for Boko Haram, with an increase in the frequency and sophistication of attacks. The use of IEDs quadrupled between 2010 and 2011, with 196 confirmed incidents

compared to 52 the previous year.[34] Starting in the summer, Boko Haram began carrying out a number of bank robberies, demonstrating a deliberate strategy to "self-fund." It attacked over 100 banks in Katsina, Adamawa, Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, and Niger, stealing an estimated US$ 7 million.[35] The assailants continued targeting police barracks and military patrols as these provided a reliable source of armament that could easily be stolen, in addition to being symbols of the state's power. The presidential elections in April 2011 do not seem to have had any demonstrable impact on the attack patterns of Boko Haram, with little change in the frequency or number of fatalities. Electoral infrastructure and symbols also did not come under significant attack, which suggests that Boko Haram's grievances were local and its political agenda at the time excluded the presidency. A bomb explosion at an electoral office in Suleija that killed 13 people and another two bomb attacks in Maiduguri on election day were attributed by some to Boko Haram but not officially claimed by the sect.

The use of suicide attacks, albeit in a limited fashion, was arguably the main development in Boko Haram's strategy. It was also a shock to many Nigerians who were convinced that "Nigerians would never blow themselves up for any cause" as they were too individualistic and "loved life."[36] Yet between June 2011 and November 2012, the group mounted over 29 suicide attacks, mostly in Borno State, suggesting a new level of fanatic commitment from its members.[37] The first reported suicide attack carried out by Boko Haram member Mohammed Manga targeted the police headquarters in Abuja in June 2011. The 35-year-old father of five gained access to the parking lot and detonated his explosive-laden car, killing at least six people. This incidence was followed by a more high-profile attack against the UN headquarters in Abuja two months later. On August 26, 2011, a young man, presumably wearing a suicide vest, drove his car through the exit gates of the UN headquarters. He had evidently conducted advance reconnaissance, as this entrance was less guarded than the other. The building hosts over 400 UN staff, including 26 humanitarian and development agencies. At least 23 people were killed in the blast, with a further 100 people wounded.

Boko Haram later claimed responsibility for the attack and released a video of the alleged suicide bomber Mohammed Abdule Barra, a 27-year-old man who explained he was carrying out Allah's bidding. Besides its

obvious symbolism, the suicide attack on the UN headquarters is evidence of a new phase of Boko Haram's war. The mastermind for the attack is reputed to be Mamman Nur, who had been third in command after Yusuf and Shekau under the previous leadership and had received training abroad.[38] David Cook at the Baker Institute, however, understands the bombing of the UN headquarters as a direct attack on the World Health Organization and a continuation of an existing policy to attack medical providers, rather than a targeting of foreign symbols.[39] The latter are viewed with fear and suspicion in northern Nigeria, following the deaths of several children in Kano during a failed meningitis drug trial led by pharmaceutical company Pfizer.[40] According to Freedom Onuoha, the radical and hardline leadership of Abu Shekau and a rapprochement with foreign Islamist groups account for the unprecedented use of suicide as a terrorist tactic in Nigeria.[41] The selection of the United Nations as a target alludes to a perceived international agenda, in line with Boko Haram's condemnation of Western institutions and influences. It is important to note that, so far, the attack on the UN headquarters is an anomaly, and by 2016 the sect had carried out very few attacks against international symbols or indeed in the Nigerian capital all together.

At the end of 2011, Boko Haram again carried out multiple attacks on Christians and churches. Although Christians had been targeted sporadically since 2009—between June and July, approximately 20 churches were destroyed and at least 50 Christians killed in Maiduguri[42]—the Christmas Day attacks in 2011 marked a new threshold for sectarian killings in Nigeria. Boko Haram claimed responsibility for a series of bomb attacks on churches in several cities: Damaturu and Gadaka in Yobe State and Jos in Plateau State. A suicide attack on St Theresa's Church in Madalla, 40 km from Abuja, left at least 40 people dead and 60 injured. The coordination of multiple attacks demonstrates the capability for Boko Haram to operate across a wide area of Nigeria and the intent to carry out attacks specifically against the Christian community. The sectarian nature of the attacks suggests two possibilities: a continuation of Mohammed Yusuf's policy to return Nigeria to a pure Islamic state, or, according to Perouse de Montclos, Boko Haram and its leadership's desire to embed themselves as part of a wider jihadi movement with increased visibility.[43]

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

During Mohammed Yusuf's reign, the proselytizer served as both the spiritual leader and the commander in chief, assisted by two deputies, Abubakar Shekau and Mamman Nur. The group also included an executive cabinet and a decision-making council, known as the *Shura.*[44] The Yusufiyya movement opened branches in Borno, Yobe, Katsina, and Bauchi states where they appointed a local leader, or *amir*. It appears that at this early stage, Boko Haram had a clear chain of command, which was headed by Yusuf, who maintained spiritual control over all the cells via his sermons.

The organizational structure under Abu Shekau on the other hand is far less centralized, with cells and units operating across the country. According to journalist Ndahi Marama, the group is still led by a *Shura* of which Abu Shekau is the leader, and includes a local representative for each cell. The council decides on all matters central to the strategy and coordination of the group. For example, in April 2013, the *Shura* decided against accepting a proposed amnesty from the government. Its alleged spokesperson, Abu Dardam, explained that democracy was not in line with the organization, and therefore Boko Haram could not recognize or accept any offers made by the elected government.[45]

The cell-like structure of the organization enables Boko Haram to operate across the country in a coordinated fashion. At the same time, individual cell commanders have a high level of autonomy, which enables them to conduct attacks without consultation with the central command. This has created a number of obstacles for the security forces, as they cannot, through decapitation alone, hope to neutralize the threat of Boko Haram. There is little from current field findings to suggest that decapitation, that is, the elimination of a perpetrator group's senior leadership, will necessarily impede the operations of Boko Haram's independent cells across northern Nigeria. Indeed, rumors of Abu Shekau's death have not had a demonstrable impact on the group's pattern of attacks, suggesting that his leadership is at the very least symbolic, but not a driving force behind Boko Haram's current momentum. This loose structure has also allowed for the creation of factions within the leadership, as evidenced by the emergence of splinter group Ansaru in 2012. In addition, messages released

by Boko Haram's spokespersons are undermined by competing claims for legitimacy and control by other sections of the organization.

POLICE BRUTALITY

The success of the independent cells is largely due to the recruitment potential of disaffected youths in northern Nigeria. In addition to a number of grievances that will be developed in the next chapters, the brutality exercised by the security forces in the country has served to alienate the local population from the government, with many joining forces with Boko Haram as a reaction to state-sponsored violence. The JTF, a combined unit made up of security, police, and paramilitary forces, has repeatedly been accused of breaching basic human rights entrenched in Nigerian and international law. A report published by Amnesty International at the end of 2014 stated that Nigeria's police and military routinely torture people as "punishment, to extort money or to extract 'confession,' " which goes "far beyond the appalling torture and killing of suspected Boko Haram members."[46] The findings of this report have been disputed by the Nigerian armed forces and other reliable sources.

The heavy-handed tactics by the security forces are by no means correlated to the increase in violence exercised by Boko Haram. The police and military personnel have long had a reputation for escalating the use of force in retaliation to any perceived or actual threat to the institution, particularly in the northeast. In addition, there has been limited accountability for the alleged abuses. Indeed, the storming of Muhammad Ali's mosque and arbitrary killings of 200 followers are evidence of a lack of restraint and accountability on the part of the armed forces. No legal measures were even taken following this military-led assault.

The 2009 raid of Yusuf's mosque and the extrajudicial killing of the preacher further served to exacerbate the situation and alienate the population from a police force that was deemed ruthless and corrupt. After his capture, Yusuf was brought to the Giwa military barracks where he was questioned, then handed over to the police. Picture evidence as well as numerous reports indicates that Yusuf was summarily executed in police custody. Although the police released a statement explaining Yusuf had been killed while trying to escape, witnesses testified that he was shot in the chest and in the back of the head while tied up and sitting on the floor.[47]

The execution of the religious leader at the hands of the government's security forces turned the man into a propaganda tool where he was portrayed as a martyr and became a rallying point for anyone who had been on the receiving end of a perceived unjust system. Indeed, when Boko Haram reemerged in 2010, it swore to avenge the crimes of the government, especially Yusuf's murder and the 800 people who had been killed in the July raids.

Since 2009, an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 people have been arrested, detained indefinitely, and tortured as part of the military campaign against Boko Haram.[48] According to Amnesty International, women and children were among those detained by the security forces in an effort to intimidate their husbands and entice suspected Boko Haram members out of hiding. Soldiers have descended on entire towns, perpetuating a cycle "of attack and counter-attack (which) has been marked by unlawful violence on both sides."[49] Most notorious perhaps is the April 2013 assault of Baga, a town on the edge of Lake Chad, that was allegedly sacked by soldiers following an ambush on a patrol vehicle in the region. Human Rights Watch assessed that at least 187 people were killed in the rampage and that 2,275 buildings had been destroyed, mostly by fire.[50] The army denies the allegations and suggests that insurgents dressed in camouflage led the rampage—something that Boko Haram has done in the past.[51]

The impunity with which the security forces operate has created a "climate of fear in which people are too scared to report crimes and journalists do not dare report them."[52] As a result, the JTF was unable to depend on the cooperation of the population in the counterinsurgency operation or on the judicial system to follow up on arrests, thereby weakening its ability to implement a proper strategy. In addition, the police abuses have pushed some Nigerians into the recruiting arms of Boko Haram, which is perceived as the only viable option to avenge the crimes the security personnel committed against family members and friends. One resident of Maiduguri quoted in a Nigerian paper stated that "we don't have a problem with Boko Haram; our problem is with the police and the military that harass and kill our innocent people. They call every Muslim a Boko Haram."[53]

Despite the media's and analysts' claims that police brutality has been a driving force behind the radicalization of populations in the northeast of

Nigeria, it is important to note one study led by the United States Institute for Peace, which found that "alleged excesses of security forces are among the least important drivers of youth extremism and violence."[54] The report concluded that "poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and weak family structures" in addition to perceived government corruption were principal factors that led to the recruitment and radicalization of young people.[55]

The lack of public confidence in the security forces of the country and the failures of the state to guarantee security and basic living standards effectively undermine the credibility of a government and mobilize public resentment.

Following a speech by Goodluck Jonathan in January 2012 and an increase in violent attacks by Boko Haram, the federal government finally declared a state of emergency in 15 LGAs,[56] giving security forces additional powers in the region. A state of emergency makes the governor subordinate to the JTF commander, in matters of security within the theater of operations.

SHEKAU'S REVENGE

Goodluck Jonathan's state of emergency was immediately undermined in the ensuing Kano attacks in January 2012. Up to that point Kano, an important trading center in northern Nigeria, had been largely spared from the sectarian violence. In December 2011, a letter supposedly by Abu Shekau warned the residents of the city that they would be attacked following the arrest of several Boko Haram members. The police commissioner in Kano State acknowledged that a number of people had been arrested but declined to release further information.

On January 20, after Friday prayers, a series of coordinated attacks rocked the commercial city of 3 million plus people, leaving 185 dead and many more wounded. Gunmen targeted four police stations and the regional police headquarters, releasing prisoners and killing 32 police officers. Passport and immigration offices were also attacked, and "dozens, possibly hundreds" of armed assailants dressed in police and military uniforms drove around the city on motorcycles and in cars, laying down explosives and shooting at civilians.[57] Officials claimed that the attack included at least

five suicide bombers, and they discovered a further 10 unexploded car bombs and 300 handmade bombs around the city.[58]

In the aftermath, a 24-hour curfew was imposed in Kano as security personnel, including police, soldiers, and the State Security Services,[59] deployed around the city, raiding a Boko Haram hideout in Tsamiyar Boka area near the police barracks. They also carried out mass arrests of 158 "members" of the sect. The Kano attacks were to date the most deadly operation by Boko Haram and demonstrated a sophisticated degree of cooperation between its cells. Two days later, the group renewed its attacks, targeting a bank and two churches in neighboring Bauchi State.

Shekau's strategic success in Kano was not well received within the *Shura* however: his victims were overwhelmingly Muslim, a practice he justified by the espousal of *Takfiri* ideology, that is, declaring other Muslims infidels and excommunicating them.[60] The leadership of Boko Haram was further strained over the Kawar Maila killings a few days later: A spokesman for the sect admitted that the group had killed 7 civilians in the Maiduguri neighborhood and earmarked a further 30 for allegedly betraying their members to the security forces, leading to their death.[61] The JTF had indeed arrested and were suspected of executing nine men from the Kawar Maila Ward on December 27, claiming "incontrovertible evidence" that the suspects were members of Boko Haram.[62]

THE SPLINTER GROUP ANSARU

The dispute over Shekau's perceived gratuitous brutality and targeting of Muslims eventually led to the establishment of the splinter group *Jama'atul Ansaru Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan* translated roughly into "Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa" on January 26, 2012. The new Islamist group announced its creation publicly by releasing flyers in Kano, describing itself as a humane alternative to Boko Haram: it only targeted the Nigerian government and Christians, and would not attack Muslims except in self-defense. In June 2012, the group released a video dubbed in English and Hausa in which its self-proclaimed leader Abu Usamarul Ansari—a *nom de guerre* for Boko Haram member Khalid al-Barnawi—outlined the ideological stand of Ansaru as prescribed in its charter and explained its schism with Boko Haram.

Although ideologically close to Boko Haram, Ansaru has carried out its attacks using its individual signature, which focuses primarily on the kidnappings of foreigners. According to Nigerian security sources, the group previously went by the name "al-Qaeda in the Land beyond the Sahel" and has been operational since at least 2011 when it kidnapped two European engineers from a construction site in Kebbi.[63] Ansaru's tactics are most likely a reflection of the ideology of its new leaders who are believed to be Yusuf's original deputy, Mamman Nur, and Khalid al-Barnawi. Both men were previously close to Abu Shekau and had undergone training abroad. Nur fled to Somalia in 2009 after the raid of Mohammed Yusuf's mosque and trained with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al-Shabaab militants. Nigerien-born al-Barnawi on the other hand had ties with AQIM in Algeria and led kidnapping and smuggling operations with Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the commander of the infamous In Amenas hostage operation in 2013.[64] Al-Barnawi reputedly fell out with Abu Shekau over the sharing of a 40 million naira ($250,000) ransom that al-Barnawi had "donated" to Boko Haram in 2011[65] and which Shekau refused to split.

Al-Barnawi and Nur's association with known Islamist terrorist groups most likely influenced the tactical shifts of Boko Haram in 2011, evidenced in the group's use of suicide bombings and targeting of international symbols such as the UN attack in Abuja. The group's strategic release of videos and statements to the press suggests a desire for an international profile that Boko Haram has not manifested and an awareness of public relations characteristic of modern jihadi groups. The schism is accentuated by Ansaru's claim to defend the interests of Muslims across West Africa and in Africa as a whole, contrary to Boko Haram's local ambitions. The splinter group has carried out only two attacks on Nigerian interests—an assault on an Abuja prison in November 2012 and an ambush on Mali-bound Nigerian troops near Kogi in January 2013. It justified the second attack as retaliation for the government's military involvement in Mali.

Ironically the emergence of Ansaru also coincided with Shekau's flight to Gao,[66] in northern Mali: Security forces raided one of his hideouts in Kano in February 2012 following a tip-off by a recruit.[67] Nonetheless, Ansaru did not move into Boko Haram's area of influence in the northeast but instead settled in Kano. The commercial center enabled the group to develop its

tactical reach across vast areas of Nigeria and foster its international network.

THE MALI INTERLUDE

Ansaru's emergence and success would not have occurred without the war in Mali, as it opened up a new plane in which violent Islamist groups briefly thrived. In March 2012, a Tuareg rebellion in Northern Mali triggered a political crisis between the Malian Army and President Amadou Touré in which the latter was violently overthrown and replaced by a military junta. The ensuing chaos enabled the Tuareg rebels to tighten their hold over the north of the country and declare it part of the Independent Tuareg State of Azawad, an unrecognized territory to be led by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA).

In the process, the MNLA temporarily fostered a strategic military alliance with two Islamist groups, *Harakat Ansar al-Dine* meaning "movement of defenders of the faith" and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), a splinter group of AQIM. Together, the allies captured the cities of Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal, and set their sights on the southern capital Bamako. The Islamists insisted on implementing sharia law under their rule, however, effectively hijacking the separatist movement to fulfill their own political agenda. This eventually led to the split with the MNLA, which declared in January 2013 that it did not support "extremism or terrorism" and welcomed France's intervention and the opportunity to voice its legitimate political grievances.[68]

Between April 2012 and January 2013, Islamist groups were for all intents and purposes had military control of a territory the size of France, which enabled them to accumulate capital. Northern Mali had long been the gateway for the drug trade, particularly Marijuana and Cocaine, to Africa and Europe and enjoyed deep trafficking networks across the region. The relationship between drug traders and terrorists is complex, but reports suggest that AQIM derived a large proportion of its wealth by providing drug convoys with security across its territory, in exchange for materials including vehicles, medical supplies, weapons, and electronics.[69] Drug smugglers also provided important regional connections to MUJAO through their established presence in Gao and networks across the Sahel and into the Middle East. The break between the MNLA and the Islamists

was allegedly caused by the vast difference in wealth between the groups, which enabled the latter to gain the upper hand by enticing the MNLA's combatants away from their leaders.

During the brief period of their rule in northern Mali, the Islamists developed their criminal networks including drug and human trafficking, smuggling of arms and cigarettes, and kidnap for ransom. These enterprises provided them with an independent source of revenue to finance training camps in Mali and invited like-minded organizations to meet in Gao. In Timbuktu, AQIM ran a sophisticated training camp for multinational terrorists, the majority of whom were Nigerians, "all of them members of Boko Haram."[70] Over a nine-month period "hundreds of Boko Haram members" stayed at these camps where they "learned to fix Kalashnikovs and launch shoulder-fired weapons."[71] In addition, these centers provided perfect conditions for exchanging battlefield skills and ideologies. Although some reports on the details of the AQIM and MUJAO-run training camps lack credibility, there is little dispute over the exchange of communications between the leadership of Ansaru and AQIM: in February 2013, Ansaru flyers were discovered in AQIM commander Mokhtar Belmokhtar's compound after he fled Gao. Abu Shekau also voiced his support for "the soldiers of the Islamic State of Mali" and likely spent a portion of 2012 in northern Mali from where he directed operations in Nigeria.[72] In addition, Shekau maintained good relations with Ansaru's leadership, publicly praising their success in carrying out the 2012 prison break.

The Islamist "hey-days" ended in January 2013, however, following a French-led military intervention in Mali. The establishment of a terrorist state—the first of its kind in the Westphalian system of states—eventually triggered an international response that appears to have been both swift and efficient. France deployed 4,000 soldiers supported by air power that bombarded the rebels' positions and destroyed the Islamists' training camps. A further 6,000 ECOWAS troops, led by Nigeria, supported the Franco-Malian effort. Key Islamists, such as Abu Zeid who had maintained close relations with Boko Haram and Ansaru leaders, were killed or displaced in the process, disrupting the Nigerian groups' regional network. The Islamic State of Azawad in northern Mali nonetheless offered a window of opportunity for Islamist groups and showed them how to create their own fiefdoms, as evidenced in the shared ambitions of the Islamic State (Daesh) and Boko Haram to build a caliphate.

Although Mali has returned to a tenuous civilian leadership, the country remains fragile and arguably ungovernable. Various extremist groups continue to operate freely in the northern parts of the country. They regularly mount attacks against the Malian Army and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali peacekeepers stationed in the area, and have kidnapped a handful of NGO workers. In March 2015, assailants launched a complex attack on a UN base and a popular restaurant in Bamako,[73] followed by an attack at the Radisson Blu where they took 170 people hostage in November. This reveals the continued ambitions and capabilities of terrorists in the region.

THE REUNIFICATION

The Mali interlude offered new possibilities to violent groups around the world, and not the least in Nigeria. The militants who joined the insurgency in northern Mali returned with new skills, experiences, and friends. Exposure to Belmokhtar and other Islamists probably influenced Shekau and his commanders, transforming the political agenda and strategy of Boko Haram. Ansaru has also likely disappeared as an independent entity and is believed to have merged again with its parent group.

Ansaru's strategic successes and its rapid rise to international fame demonstrated to Boko Haram's leaders that there was room for improvement. In only five months, Ansaru carried out four high-risk operations in four different states: In addition to the 2011 kidnapping in Kebbi mentioned above and the assaults on the army and a prison in Abuja, Ansaru specialized in the targeting of foreign nationals, thereby undermining the ability of the state to provide security to its valued guests. In December 2012, militants kidnapped a French engineer from a guarded compound in Katsina. This was followed by a militarily sophisticated assault on another construction site in February 2013 in Bauchi during which the assailants took seven foreigner engineers with them. Although kidnap and ransom (K&R) was prevalent in the south of the country, particularly in the Niger Delta, the crime was virtually nonexistent in the north prior to 2012. Ansaru never made any public appeals for money or negotiations—although security advisers have privately reported covert negotiations were taking place. Indeed in March 2013 the group released a video, as usual dubbed in both Hausa and English for the public, in which it

showed images of its dead hostages. The killings offered a gruesome window into the nihilistic objectives of the splinter group but also suggested that it had sufficient funding that it did not need to resort to K&R as a source of revenue.

Ansaru's influence on Boko Haram became evident in February 2013, when Abu Shekau claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of a family of seven Frenchmen, including four children, in northern Cameroon. This was a striking departure from the sect's previous position: In March 2012, Boko Haram's alleged spokesman Abu Qaqa accused journalists of misrepresenting the group and firmly stated that "we have never been involved in hostage taking and it is not part of our style, and we never ask for ransom."[74] It is not clear whether Boko Haram actually carried out the operation on the Moulin-Fournier family members, or whether they were spotted by opportunistic criminals who later sold them to Shekau's group. Ansaru or another similar group was likely responsible for the kidnapping in Cameroon and subsequently transferred the victims to Boko Haram in Borno State. Regardless, this marked a turning point for the sect. The family was released two months later, supposedly in exchange for the release of 19 Boko Haram prisoners in Cameroon and a ransom of $3.14 million.[75] The French and Cameroonian governments have denied that any money exchanged hand, although France does have a reputation for "paying up."

Since 2012, Boko Haram has developed its own "special kidnapping squad" that has taken hundreds of people hostage: some governors and their families in Cameroon have been released upon payment of a ransom or the exchange of prisoners; others such as the Chibok girls were still being held by the sect in 2016. The influence of Ansaru on Boko Haram's new tactics is visible and probably the result of the ongoing association between members from the two groups. Ansaru has not claimed any attacks since at least May 2013, when a known militant appeared in a video celebrating the suicide attack on the Arlit uranium mine in Niger. The most likely scenario cited is that Ansaru has merged with Boko Haram following the disruptions caused to its international networks by the French-led intervention in Mali, although there are contradictory opinions regarding the so-called merger and limited evidence according to some expert witnesses.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: "BECOMING" A TERRORIST GROUP

The supposed alliance between Ansaru and Boko Haram, in addition to the opportunities created by the brief existence of an Islamist state in Mali, transformed the militaristic sect into a full-blown terrorist group. Since May 2013, coinciding with the last public trace of Ansaru, Boko Haram has increased its tempo of attacks and adopted distinctly more sophisticated weaponry, providing evidence of its strengthened international connections and development as a violent ideological organization.

By May 2013, attacks in the northeast had become a near-daily occurrence, with civilians and specifically schools targeted by the insurgents. Boko Haram has singled out educational facilities since 2012, launching 47 attacks that year resulting in 77 fatalities.[76] Schools are regularly burnt down and students murdered in retaliation to the supposed government-mandated closures of Islamic schools in Maiduguri. Schools are easy targets, poorly defended and full of potential victims, and they have now become part of Shekau's campaign of terror.[77] In a particularly grueling attack in July 2013, Boko Haram assailants set fire to the Government Secondary School in Potiskum LGA, Yobe, and opened fire on the children fleeing the flames, killing 46 and wounding a further 4.

An increase in violence in May 2013 finally led to a state of emergency in Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa states and the deployment of additional security forces. On May 2, 2013, at least 100 gunmen launched an attack in Marte, Borno, destroying public buildings including schools, hospitals, and police stations. A week later, 200 assailants attacked a military barrack and a nearby police station in Bama, and kidnapped several women and children. Shekau later released a video explaining that the abductions were retaliation for the routine imprisonment of the wives and children of Boko Haram members, and that more kidnappings could be expected. Goodluck Jonathan claimed that the latest spate of violence was a "declaration of war"[78] and imposed the state of emergency in three states—although the measure was probably precipitated as much by rumors that Abu Shekau was going to declare an independent state in the northeast as by the sudden increase in violence.

Boko Haram's success at amassing sophisticated weapons has also changed the group's strategic and regional impact. "Rocket-propelled

grenades (RPGs), machine guns with anti-aircraft visors, automatic rifles, ammunition, grenades, explosives (Semtex), and light anti-aircraft artillery (light caliber bi-tubes) mounted on vehicles" but also surface-to-air missiles and man-portable air defense systems may have reached the sect by ways of weapon smuggling routes from Nigeria since the Libyan civil war erupted in 2011.[79] A UN report in February 2014 stated that "no material originating from Libya was identified" among Nigerien seizures,[80] although this does not exclude the possibility that Boko Haram has gained access to this weaponry. Indeed, a raid on a Boko Haram hideout in March 2013 led to the discovery of mounted weapons on four-wheel-drive vehicles and improvised fighting vehicles, reflecting at the very least its recent exposure to AQIM militants who have long had access to these arms and even acquired heavy weapons such as antitank missiles.[81] Hundreds of RPGs, rocket launchers that are used for long-range attacks, antiaircraft missiles, and AK47 rifles have also been intercepted by the Nigerian security forces, lending credence to the complaints of some military personnel that Boko Haram is often better equipped that they are.

By the end of 2013, after little more than three years of operation under his leadership, Abu Shekau's organization had become a real and immediate threat to the Nigerian government in the northeast. Boko Haram counted nearly 15,000 militants including recruits from neighboring countries and had established international links with like-minded terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda. It had acquired sophisticated weaponry, received funding domestically and from abroad, and mounted countless attacks in Nigeria and across the border with escalating levels of violence. Finally, in November 2013, the U.S. Department of State announced that it had added Boko Haram and Ansaru to the list of foreign terrorist organizations. The United Kingdom had already designated Boko Haram as a terrorist group in July 2013. Nearly a year later, in May 2014, the United Nations followed suit and declared Boko Haram a terrorist group linked to Al Qaeda, subjecting the militants to sanctions, including an arms embargo and asset freeze.

CHAPTER 4

The "Flight" of Boko Haram

The rise and success of Boko Haram between 2013 and 2014 was unprecedented among Islamist terrorist organizations. In 2014, the group was responsible for 7,512 deaths, equivalent to 23 percent of all terrorism-related deaths worldwide and an increase of 300 percent on its attacks in 2013.[1] It also expanded its operational reach across the border into Chad and Cameroon where it staged 46 attacks in 2014. Furthermore, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's (AQIM) success in Mali set a new standard, and Boko Haram subsequently changed its strategy from guerilla to conventional or position warfare, occupying vast swaths of territory in Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa states, in northeast Nigeria. By some estimates, in January 2015, Boko Haram was in control of roughly 11,780 square miles, approximately the size of Belgium or Maryland, including over 70 percent of Borno State.

Faced with Boko Haram's outrageous success, the Nigerian government, propped up by a regional coalition and international support, was compelled to revise its strategy. After nearly a year of ongoing military operations in the northeast, newly elected President Buhari announced in December 2015 that the threat of Boko Haram had been neutralized and the group "technically defeated." He explained that the Nigerian military had reclaimed all the territory between Maiduguri and Bama, forcing the militants into the Sambisa Forest where "they can no longer carry out any spectacular attack."[2] After its remarkable rise, Boko Haram has returned to waging a localized insurgency and employing guerilla tactics, mainly going

after soft targets with suicide bombings and lightning assaults. While it is uncertain whether the group will ever entirely disappear—after all, the government has yet to address the socioeconomic grievances that enabled its success in the first place—it appears to have been contained for the time being.

This chapter analyzes the rise and fall of Boko Haram between May 2013 and January 2016. Like Icarus, Boko Haram flew too high, too fast. It expanded and became overly ambitious, and instead of consolidating its position, it made new alliances and new enemies and forced a previously complacent government into action. The "flight" of Boko Haram ends in a similar way, crashing into the ground. Although Boko Haram is not entirely defeated, its hold over Nigeria appears to be. It is up to the country and its citizens to pick up the pieces and rebuild the schools, cities, and homes of the 2.2 million people displaced in an insurgency that never should have been allowed to occur in the first place.

THE FAILED STATE OF EMERGENCY

Boko Haram was able to make incredible advances in 2014, despite the state of emergency declared in Adamawa, Yobe, and Borno states in May 2013. The state of emergency enabled the Jonathan government to deploy troops with powers to arrest and detain suspects, and search and take over suspicious buildings. It also set a curfew on all residents and shut off phone signals, exacerbating existing hardships. Unable to stem the violence, the government further imposed a travel ban over Christmas in 2014. Senators debating an extension of the state of emergency, however, described it as "outright failure," as the terrorist group was able to expand in the 18 months following the implementation of the policy.[3]

Despite the state of emergency, Boko Haram developed its strategy and area of operation, focusing on soft civilian targets and waging a terrifying war against the state and its citizens. Especially deadly and disrupting was its campaign of attacking schools, particularly in Yobe State, where it kidnaped and massacred hundreds of students. In July 2013, Boko Haram burned down a school in Mamudo, outside Damaturu, killing 29 students and a teacher. Then in September, the militants stormed the College of Agriculture in Gujba, killing 44 students and teachers asleep in the dormitories. Attacks on schools continued in 2014, with another 29 students

killed in a federal college in Buni Yadi in February, culminating with the kidnapping of 276 girls from a secondary school in Chibok, Borno State. The kidnapping of the Chibok girls however changed the narrative for Nigerians. After 21 days of ignoring the attack or blaming it as a conspiracy led by northern politicians, the Jonathan government was finally forced to action.

According to witnesses in Abuja, Goodluck Jonathan was taken by surprise by the international outrage that followed the kidnapping of the girls. It was neither the first nor possibly the largest attack of its kind in Nigeria—at least 2,000 people had been kidnapped since the advent of Boko Haram—but it was a game changer. Jonathan's failure to react publicly revealed the apathy of the government toward the "northern" problem of Boko Haram. And neither Jonathan nor his advisers seemed to have a solution or any idea how to save these girls from their fate—incidentally his successor Buhari hasn't done much better either. There have since been several attempts to negotiate a release of the hostages, but while much money has changed hands, little else has been accomplished. Negotiators have found it difficult to reach the right faction of Boko Haram—ostensibly the girls are being held by Shekau's cohort—while many imposters have taken advantage of the situation. A promising operation in August 2014 allegedly facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) failed due to the military presence that was mobilized in Yola. A source close to the ICRC reported that the government had also botched an exchange of prisoners, further eroding the insurgents' faith in the process. Observers have speculated that the girls may have been sold into slavery,[4] radicalized, and forced to marry Boko Haram militants. Other credible sources have claimed that Shekau (or his successors) were keeping the girls in the Sambisa Forest, which is entirely booby-trapped, and would use them as the trump card when they make their last stand. The girls may also serve as insurance that the army won't simply bombard the militants' position from the air.[5] Meanwhile, there has been little government support or compensation for the inhabitants of Chibok, further isolating the northern communities from the political center.

The targeting of schools and kidnapping of schoolchildren effectively crystalized Boko Haram's war on education. Not only did this disrupt education for the students, it also created panic among Nigerian families who pulled their children from the schools. According to a report by

UNICEF published in 2015, at least one million children have been forced to interrupt their education,[6] further highlighting the government's complete inability to offer security to its most vulnerable citizens.

TERRITORIAL EXPANSION

Most damning for the Jonathan government and the armed forces is undoubtedly Boko Haram's rapid territorial expansion in 2014. At first, Boko Haram simply moved into villages in the northeast of Borno State where there was little if any police presence. Some of the villages are so dispersed that there "is not a friendly walled city within a week's journey."[7] This power vacuum offered an irresistible opportunity for the group to easily claim territory and consolidate its position. Town by town, the militants expanded their hold across the state and into parts of Yobe and Adamawa, walking into areas from which the government was virtually absent.

Boko Haram was able to gain territory principally for two reasons: first, thanks to its access to weapons and ammunitions that improved its strike capability, and second, the total absence of the military in these areas and the general lack of resistance to the advance of the militants. Rocket launchers and armored vehicles stolen or, according to some sources, bought from Nigerian military personnel[8] complete an arsenal that includes small arms, automatic weapons, rifles, grenades, and mortars. The easy access to weapons is facilitated by the vibrant black market that circulates across West Africa and the Sahel to the Mediterranean. According to some eyewitnesses, Boko Haram militants were often better armed than Nigerian soldiers.

On the other hand, the Nigerian armed forces have also abandoned one outpost after another, including Bama in September 2014, which is the second largest town in Borno and just 40 miles away from Maiduguri.[9] A Chatham House report published in 2015 concluded that the Nigerian Army suffered from "lack of clear directive […], lack of equipment and training."[10] The U.S. Congressional Research Service added "security sector mismanagement and corruption"[11] to the long list of failings characterizing the armed forces. A demoralized security sector had to regroup its forces and find the best way to counter Boko Haram's advance,

an effort that would undoubtedly take some time and require external expertise.

The establishment of an Islamic capital in the mountainous border town of Gwoza, Borno State, in August 2014 marked a turning point for Abu Shekau's ambitions. In September, Shekau claimed leadership of an Islamic caliphate in Nigeria and later declared Boko Haram to be the West African branch of ISIS. This shift away from traditional hit-and-run tactics to position warfare was a risky gamble and evidence of the man's delusional state. By March 2015, the Nigerian Army, allegedly with the help of foreign private military providers, had retaken the town and forced Boko Haram out of its stronghold. Meanwhile, Boko Haram sought to expand its territorial claims across the borders into Cameroon and Chad. This additional miscalculation would later help cement the military collaboration between the neighboring countries.

Throughout 2014, Boko Haram's operational successes indicated that it had both the intent and capacity to create a separatist state in northeast Nigeria. This was hardly a surprise as Abu Shekau has long been referring to the 19th-century Islamic Sokoto Caliphate led by Usman dan Fodio, which he sought to emulate. Having gathered enough recruits, Boko Haram was able to shift from typical asymmetric warfare, including a combination of guerilla and terrorist tactics, to direct assaults on cities and military positions. Furthermore, as Boko Haram expanded its territory, it increased its manpower by forcing men and boys into its army while the women were taken as slaves and hostages, constraining the men to follow and obey. A secondary but important result of Boko Haram's military successes has been the humiliation and demoralization of the Nigerian security forces and the Jonathan government, temporarily weakening any opposition to the group's territorial incursions. Abu Shekau was thereby able to inflate the public perception of Boko Haram's powers and capabilities and increase its credibility in the eyes of like-minded organizations such as Islamic State/ISIS.

URBAN GUERILLA WARFARE AND SUICIDE BOMBERS

While Boko Haram's objectives became territorial, the group also continued its strategy of urban guerilla warfare that it had perfected over the years. This included the use of suicide bombers against soft civilian targets

such as places of worship and markets, which are an unavoidable part of daily life for many Nigerians in the northeast. Suicide bombers were a new feature of insurgency/terrorist groups in Nigeria and have proven to be a terrible and effective weapon.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the use of suicide bombing was initially a shock for Nigerians. The 2011 attack was first deemed to be an isolated case, but by 2015, it had become a regular occurrence. Another novelty for Nigeria and Islamist groups in general was the use of female suicide bombers in particular. In June 2014, Boko Haram dispatched a woman who detonated the explosives hidden under her hijab in front of the 301 Battalion barracks of the Nigerian Army in Gombe, Gombe State. This was followed two weeks later by a second female suicide attack against an energy depot in Lagos. In the next 18 months, Boko Haram would deploy no less than 90 female suicide bombers, claiming at least 500 lives and injuring a further 700 people in Nigeria and Cameroon.[12] A study of the attack pattern suggests that they are moderately successful, with a number of failed attacks recorded where the bombers either blew themselves up before reaching the target or deserted. Very few attacks claim more than 10 lives, although the psychological damage to the population is undeniable, thanks in part to the sensational coverage by the media. Regardless, this is a significant departure from Boko Haram's previous approach to women who up to that point had little if any involvement in the group's activities.[13]

Boko Haram is nothing if not adaptable. As the security forces stepped up the arrests of male suspects, the militants started to use women and men dressed in women's clothes to smuggle weapons and evade capture. This ploy has been previously favored by insurgent groups, such as the National Liberation Front during the Algerian civil war and more recently by Al Qaeda in Iraq. Boko Haram tops the charts though, as "no terrorist group in history has used as many female suicide bombers as [Boko Haram] has used this year."[14] The tactic is highly effective in certain societies where women elicit less suspicion and cannot be searched anyway due to cultural sensitivities. Public calls to ban the burqa in public places—as was done in Chad following a suicide attack in June 2015—were unsuccessful in Nigeria due to the complex politico-religious tensions that characterize the country.[15] Nonetheless, as the police began to respond to the new threat and treat women as potential militants, Boko Haram again shifted its approach

and is increasingly using children, some as young as nine, for these deadly missions.

The use of suicide bombers goes hand in hand with a kidnap policy that Boko Haram has employed mercilessly since 2013. Targeting women was initially a response to the police practice of arresting female family members of suspected militants, according to an article published by Zenn and Pearson.[16] In January 2012, Abu Shekau released a video in which he threatened to kidnap the wives of government officials in retaliation for the imprisonment of his own wife. Female and children suicide bombers are often unwilling recruits, and many of these women are kidnap victims who are forced to carry out the attacks, claims Fatima Akilu, former head of Nigeria's deradicalization program.[17] One young female suicide bomber who survived had been forced by her father—who was a member of Boko Haram—to go through a radicalization program in Bauchi Forest, after which she put on the suicide vest and walked toward a crowd. Some children are blackmailed and threatened; others are wearing remote-controlled explosive belts and may not even be aware that they are about to be sacrificed for the cause.

There are also a few willing volunteers, widows and orphans of Boko Haram members who have been brainwashed and convinced to "martyr" themselves to avenge their deceased loved one. Three women arrested in 2014 confessed to working as scouts to recruit girls for the terrorist group. The girls are subsequently handed over to a "trainer" who prepares them to carry out their mission.[18] Regardless, any minor who carries out a suicide mission is quite rightly considered a victim, according to Akilu. There can be no consent, and children are vulnerable to brainwashing, blackmail, and manipulation, not to mention possible psychedelic substances as have been used on child soldiers in other African conflicts.

So far, suicide bombers, especially female and youth suicide bombers, have been a very effective weapon. They are difficult to detect and prevent and can inconspicuously gain access to crowded areas. Furthermore, they have a sensationalist impact that shocks the population into a state of fear, inflating the reputation of Boko Haram. The tactical advantages are undeniable as the security forces have had to spread themselves thin to protect urban spaces. The use of suicide bombers fits within the terrorists' strategy of urban warfare and is likely to be their weapon of choice in the

near future in the greater Lake Chad region, especially as the militants revert back to guerilla-like tactics.

BOKO HARAM'S APPEAL

Until 2015 and its reversal of fortunes, Boko Haram appeared to enjoy widespread support as its membership swelled to 15,000 people. Some of this success must be attributed to Mohammed Yusuf, the charismatic preacher who attracted a large following before his death. Indeed his sermons were recorded and distributed widely,[19] and people would travel from afar to hear him speak. He denounced the injustice and corruption of the government and appealed for a return to an Islamic way of life that attracted a poor and disenfranchised population. Yusuf created a close-knit community that offered protection from the Christian government and helped adherents to follow Islamic law. Estimates of his followers during his lifetime range from 1 million to between 4,000 and 10,000 people.[20]

To a certain extent, Yusuf's death was the main catalyst for radicalizing the group and increasing its support base. His extrajudicial murder at the hands of the police and the killing of 800 of his supporters transformed Yusuf and his group into a symbol of political defiance and martyrdom. The situation was ideal for an opportunist like Abu Shekau to take matters into his own hands. Over time and with the support of AQIM and ISIS, Shekau's circle was able to develop its strategy to increase its numbers and improve its strike capability.

One of the principal ideological appeals of Boko Haram was its rejection of Western-style education. According to local sources in Adamawa, there is a prevailing suspicion of the government-style education system that perverts students and turns them into corrupt secular elites. At the same time, the high level of unemployment in the northeast, even for graduates of public schools, suggests that there is no added benefit to Western education anyway. Faced with the perceived rot of society and governance, many people seek to shield their children by placing them in Islamic schools, which are more familiar and affordable anyway—although arguably they offer much fewer professional opportunities.

Hand in hand with the elimination of Western education comes the aspiration to overthrow the government. This is arguably the glue that binds together the members of Boko Haram and places the group into the

category of political insurgency rather than a simple religious cult. With the absolute denial of the "Western farce" that is democracy, the only means to uproot the government is through an armed struggle, which was always Abu Shekau's preferred modus operandi. Violence, whether in the form of religious clashes, civil wars, or military coup d'états, has been historically prevalent in Nigeria. It also fits into the ultra-Salafist interpretations of political Islam that have long permeated the ideology of Boko Haram and like-minded organizations.

Abu Shekau's success in encouraging violence in the context of Islam is to a large extent the product of the general lack of education among the population in the northeast. Indeed the literacy rate in Borno State barely scraped 15 percent,[21] leaving residents open and vulnerable to poisonous propaganda and dangerously charismatic preachers. And while Yusuf has been praised for his eloquence, Shekau's abilities are not to be dismissed. One refugee reported that he had been hiding in his house when the leader held a meeting with a close circle of followers. According to the man, Shekau was so passionate and convincing in his rhetoric that the refugee felt compelled to come out of hiding and had to be restrained by a friend.[22] A combination of religious sentiment, social alienation, and political discontent, along with an appealing leader, has encouraged many Nigerians in the northeast to voluntarily join Boko Haram. While characterized today as a terrorist group, it began principally as a religious cult with political undertones that nurtured a feeling of belonging and empowerment among its members. Only progressively did Boko Haram become a radical ultraviolent group, indiscriminately targeting Christians and Muslims alike, and enslaving and killing women and children.

ISLAMIC RADICALIZATION

There is limited knowledge on radicalization, especially Islamic radicalization, and much academic speculation on the matter. No universal definition of "radicalization" currently exists, and therefore, "the search for what exactly 'radicalisation' is, what causes it and how to 'de-radicalise' those who are considered radicals, violent extremists or terrorists, is a frustrating experience."[23] Much of the existing literature focuses on Islamist radicalization in the West, with very few research projects pertaining

specifically to African nations or to Boko Haram. Regardless, as long as the declared grievances of radical Islamists, wherever they are, are not taken into account, there is little chance to prevent or push back this growing phenomenon.

For the purpose of this book, "radicalization" is understood along the lines of the Danish intelligence services definition as the process of ideological indoctrination that leads to the support for, justification of, and commitment to violence for politico-ideological ends. Historically, radicals are not necessarily in favor of violence and may support the transformation of society through peaceful means. Manus Midlarsky in his study of political extremism defined the term as a social movement supporting a political program at odds with the state, and willing to take extreme measures against its opponents, including, but not always, "the mass murder of those who would actually or potentially disagree with that program."[24] In the case of Boko Haram, it is interesting to evaluate how the organization moved from its relatively inoffensive religious beliefs to the indiscriminate killing of thousands of countrymen.

The causes for radicalization are varied, and terrorists generally come from many different socioeconomic backgrounds.[25] In northeast Nigeria, however, the poverty and high unemployment rate offer an easy and comparatively homogeneous recruitment pool for Boko Haram. With few job opportunities available, there is a low opportunity cost to joining Boko Haram and the added attraction of money and guns. The latter also creates a sense of empowerment for men who have felt socially or politically marginalized. Many witnesses have stated that Boko Haram pay the recruits, offering them a livelihood and social status that has nothing to do, initially, with ideological indoctrination. Jobless men from Diffa in Niger were allegedly offered over $3,000 per mission,[26] and some insurgents killed by the military were reportedly found with thousand-dollar notes on them.[27] Radicalization then is a gradual process that takes place over time.

Another important mobilizing factor is the capitalization on existing grievances, real or perceived.[28] Northeast Nigeria, as mentioned previously, is characterized by political isolation and socioeconomic injustice. Furthermore, the track record of the police and security forces has exacerbated relations between the citizens and the state, showing that there is no accountability for the latter and no hope for the former. Grievances,

however, are a worldwide phenomenon. As a result, this is not sufficient to explain the success of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Veldhuis and Staun argue that the process of radicalization requires a "trigger" to set off a chain of events including the commitment of the individual to the cause and subsequently his or her consent and participation in acts of violence.[29] To this, we would add a charismatic leader who can project credibility—or fear.

Fieldwork in Abuja and nearby refugee camps revealed the level of indoctrination that goes on inside Boko Haram. Prisoners, many of whom have been kidnapped, are forced to live in squalid conditions inside Sambisa Forest, one of Boko Haram's strongholds. There is very little to keep busy in the forest, leisure activities being strictly banned. The militants pass the time harassing their victims and forcing them to learn verses of the Koran in an effort to convert the Christians and force the Muslims to following Boko Haram's brand of Islam. Little by little, the militants break down the identity of their prisoners by keeping them isolated from their communities and subjecting them to humiliating treatment and, according to some testimonies, sexual abuse.[30] Survivors have testified to being given no choice but to join the group or be killed, and to carry out attacks in order to protect themselves and their families. The use of fear and violence is an effective weapon that Boko Haram has perfected to radicalize its members, often against their will. This is typical of many rebel groups across Africa, such as the Lord's Resistance Army, the Revolutionary United Front, and the Allied Democratic Forces in DR Congo.

It is pertinent therefore to consider the radicalization of the most violent willing members of Boko Haram to understand their capability to kill mercilessly. The main difference between Yusuf's cult and Shekau's organization is the personality of the leader. Abubakar Shekau adopted a more hardline approach after taking over Yusuf's position as the sect's spiritual leader. Shekau is rumored to have spent some time in a psychiatric hospital in Maiduguri, and his raving video statements are indicative of someone who is mentally unstable.[31]

Shekau has boasted about "Enjoy(ing) killing anyone that God commands me to kill the same way I enjoy killing chickens and rams." He has encouraged his followers to "just pick up your knife, break into homes and kill; slaughter anyone in their sleep you come across." A jailed militant in the government's deradicalization program described Shekau as "very

obstinate" and "impossible to reason with." According to the inmate, it is Shekau's "leadership [that] has made [Boko Haram] a violent and extremist group—they don't have any regard for human life."[32] And yet this display of wanton violence has not stopped the group from gaining popularity—to the contrary. With a median age of 30 among its adherents, Boko Haram has attracted an important following of young people "who are not only ready to fight, but also lay down their lives for the new cause they have been made to believe in."[33]

CYCLES OF VIOLENCE

A controversial hypothesis to put forward, but one that bears consideration, is the level of tolerance for violence prevalent in Nigeria and particularly northeast Nigeria as a result of its economic situation and its historic and cultural legacy. Poverty, unemployment, and grievances may contribute to violence and radicalization, and a number of academics postulate that crime and social deviance are strongly related to an unequal or broken socioeconomic context.[34] However, the level of brutality wielded by Boko Haram's members is unprecedented in the country and more reminiscent of a civil war than a crime-ridden environment.

Research suggests that the extent to which a group of people identifies with a religious community, especially one that is perceived to be in conflict with another, is directly related to its willingness to carry out acts of aggression.[35] Indeed, northern Nigeria experienced a series of religious clashes in the late 1990s and early 2000s over the implementation of sharia law, which have exacerbated tensions between the Christian and Muslim communities. Evidence collected by the Cleen Foundation in 2014 seems to corroborate this hypothesis. There is significant acceptance among the people in Yobe and Borno states surveyed by the foundation that one's religious beliefs could be imposed on others by means of violence.[36] This attitude is less prevalent, for example, in Gombe State, which has a strong Christian minority, and where a much larger proportion of those surveyed rejected the use of violence to promote religion.

A large uneducated youth exposed by unregulated and vociferous preachers to extreme interpretations of religion justifying violence is also more likely to act on such beliefs without questioning the source of this

message. The government estimates that there are around 9 million children in Nigeria with no access to formal education—of which 8.5 million are in northern Nigeria—and who are vulnerable to recruitment by extremist terrorist groups such as Boko Haram.[37] The findings highlight the differences in religious diversity, economic opportunity, and literacy between the three states and how they may influence perceptions of religion and tolerance for violence.

Nigeria as a whole has also experienced cycles of violence in the form of religious uprisings such as the Maitatsine in the 1980s and the sharia riots in the 1990s. There has been a track record of political disputes and separatist wars since independence, in particular the devastating Biafra war in 1967–1968 in which between 500,000 and 1 million civilians and soldiers were killed. Finally, a well-documented culture of violence and impunity among the armed forces and police signals a widespread tolerance for brutality that the government has either ignored or failed to bring under control. Against this historic background and in view of the existing economic disparities, it is less difficult, perhaps, to justify the emergence of a violent extremist group in Nigeria.

Although radical Islamist groups have effectively become a threat to the stability and security of the country, they are neither purely motivated by religious fervor nor are they simply manipulated by ambitious politicians. The poor socioeconomic conditions of the country and a lack of faith in the government, the security forces, and their fellow countrymen have created an environment propitious to violence of any kind. Religion has therefore become a convenient vehicle for mobilizing and voicing discontent. The highly stratified religious communities and unequal development in the north and the south have facilitated this process of identification along socioreligious lines. An effective rivalry between religious communities for power and the presidency has subsequently become integrated in Nigerian politics, further entrenching the problem for the future.

EXPERIMENTS IN DERADICALIZATION

With limited understanding of radicalization and especially the current "wave" of Islamic radicalization and violence, different countries have set up experimental programs, targeting known militants. In Nigeria, as part of its strategy to counter Boko Haram, the Jonathan government set up in 2014

a deradicalization program for former militants and prisoners. To a certain extent, this was a reaction to the backlash against the military's "hard approach" that arguably had the reverse effect of further radicalizing communities. Deradicalization programs are relatively new; while they are backed by psychological studies, there is limited precedence and evidence that these programs are at all effective.

Known as the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Programme, the Nigerian initiative is hosted by the Office of the National Security Advisor in Abuja. It receives funding from both the European Union and the United States. The CVE program follows a recent trend, which seeks to counter violent extremism with a variety of policies, including addressing "intolerance, government failure, and political, economic, and social marginalization."[38] In practice, the program's approach is one of research and prevention: experts study the causes that lead to violent radicalization with the objective of eventually tackling the main socioeconomic, political, and psychological drivers. This includes identifying at-risk populations before individuals become radicalized. The task is enormous and daunting. It also requires significant community input and financial commitment, which takes time in the best of cases.

As a result, Nigeria's deradicalization program has focused principally on survivors, victims, and captured Boko Haram members. The former head of the program, psychologist Dr. Fatima Akilu, directed the experiment through two prison programs that include both a research component and an educational framework. First of all, the staff engages with the inmates on their belief systems, studying their sources of inspirations, heroes, and especially the texts in the Koran that appear to drive them. A team of imams meets with the prisoners, and they discuss religion and ideology, encouraging consultation and intellectual exploration. Prisoners also receive reading and mathematics classes, meet with individual councillors, do art therapy, and are encouraged to take part in team sports such as volleyball, football, and basketball—all the things that Boko Haram prohibits. Dr. Akilu described the program as "early days," in need of a longer period of engagement but overall "going well." All prisoners seem to have integrated well, but there is little evidence at this time that the experiment has affected or changed their fundamental belief system.[39]

One of the important features of the new prison program, which could equally be useful to CVE initiatives in other countries, is the separation of

Boko Haram prisoners from other inmates. According to Dr. Akilu, when they are together, the former spend all their time trying to convert other prisoners, a phenomenon that has been frequently observed elsewhere, and prisons are today a significant lieu for radicalization.[40]

Finally, despite the optimism in the Nigerian CVE program, under President Buhari the National Security Agency has undergone significant changes, including the removal of Dr. Akilu from her position in October 2015, replacing her with a military officer. This risks undermining the foundations of Nigeria's "soft" approach to deradicalization, and it is unclear whether or how the new government will move forward with the CVE initiative.

NIGERIA'S COUNTERINSURGENCY UNDER BUHARI

President Buhari's restructuring and apparent remilitarization of the National Security Agency are in line with his counterinsurgency strategy since he came to power. The Nigerian armed forces, with the help of foreign private military providers (discussed in Chapter 5), had already met some success pushing back Boko Haram toward the end of Goodluck Jonathan's presidential mandate. Nonetheless, many of the problems plaguing the security sector required a more determined leadership.

Since May 2015, Buhari has exerted pressure on the military to defeat Boko Haram, giving them a December deadline "or else." As a result, reclaiming the territories occupied by the insurgents was a priority but required knowledge of the terrain and population in the northeast. Buhari's appointment of Tukur Buratai, originally from Borno State, as his new chief of army staff was a popular move that repositioned the army's focus in the area. In addition, the president ordered the relocation of the military headquarters from Abuja to Maiduguri, addressing accusations that the army was too far removed from the conflict zone. The permanent presence of the Nigerian armed forces in the region has improved intelligence gathering and response times to attacks, increasing the momentum of the counterinsurgency and boosting troop morale. The soldiers act as a deterrent, reducing the opportunities for Boko Haram to carry out a successful assault. Consequently, the insurgents have reverted to guerilla tactics and suicide bombings as discussed above but also continue to attack undefended villages.

A second important initiative was the improvement of relations and cooperation with neighboring Chad and Cameroon. After coming to power, Buhari led negotiations with his counterparts in the Lake Chad region, ensuring their participation in the counterinsurgency efforts across common borders. No longer would neighboring countries serve as safe havens for insurgents fleeing the Nigerian Army. The food and logistic routes into Borno State have also been seriously disrupted by the increased military presence and cooperation. However as the Nigerians step up their response to Boko Haram, the insurgents have effectively moved their area of operations to Chad and Cameroon. According to the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria, Boko Haram launched over 30 attacks against Niger, Chad, and Cameroon in 2015, killing at least 500 people.[41] Islands in Lake Chad appear to have become a new target: militants are increasingly resorting to suicide attacks, with more than half of all attacks carried out using human bombs.

Since early 2015, the Nigerian Army has not only pushed back the militants but also brought the fight to their doorstep. According to reports in local press, the army has cleared several terrorist "camps" in Borno State, confiscating weapons and disabling the recruitment and radicalization process. The Sambisa Forest, believed to be Shekau's hideout and possibly where the Chibok girls are being held, has also come under fire. The task is dangerous with witnesses claiming the forest is booby-trapped and strongly defended, requiring a steely determination on the part of Buhari and his military. A full assault of the forest, with its hostile terrain, natural obstacles, and unpredictable improvised explosive devices, could result in considerable loss of life. There is also the chance that the hostages would be killed in the process, either in the crossfire or by Boko Haram militants. Considering public opinion on this matter, both domestic and international, the Nigerian Army cannot afford to lose the Chibok girls in a hasty assault. On the other hand, the army's encroachments into Boko Haram territory have enabled them to rescue hundreds of hostages—although so far no Chibok girls.

The election of President Buhari and his determination to tackle the militants have also galvanized support among international allies, in particular the United States and the United Kingdom. U.S. forces deployed in neighboring Cameroon are expected to conduct air surveillance and reconnaissance activities, sharing their intelligence with their Nigerian

counterpart. British military and civilian experts are also present in Nigeria, providing the security forces with cutting-edge technology and analysis. According to a Nigerian military source, there was already enough information collected within the armed forces to put together a viable counterinsurgency strategy. However, a lack of cooperation, coordination, and information sharing among the different branches of the military slowed down the process.[42]

It takes time to put together a convincing counterinsurgency strategy. While Buhari's determination has accelerated the pace, some credit must go to the military commanders who under Goodluck Jonathan began to put in motions the necessary components to push back Boko Haram. There are still issues of accountability, corruption in the ranks, and criticisms of the way the rescued hostages, refugees, and civilians continue to be treated. The last 12 months however have been instrumental from a military perspective, resulting in the defeat of Boko Haram in most of the northeast, reducing the numbers of militants and forcing them to resort to asymmetric guerilla warfare. All of these have been enabled by Buhari's political will, with the president demanding results, encouraging cooperation, and attracting international support and expertise.

REFUGEES AND THE REHABILITATION OF HOSTAGES

Boko Haram's impact in Nigeria over the past five years will not be reversed through military means alone. The militants have kidnapped hundreds of people, subjecting them to extreme brutality and horrific living conditions, not to mention attempts at brainwashing and radicalization. Furthermore, at least two million refugees have fled the region, displacing families and disrupting livelihoods and economic productivity.[43] The rehabilitation and reintegration of all these people are crucial components in defeating the militants in the long term. Failure to do so will exacerbate divides and distrust between southerners and northerners. Loss of economic opportunities and a feeling of political disengagement are also strongly associated with radicalization. In addition to the counterinsurgency strategy, a longer-term counterradicalization approach requires care for and investment in people whose lives were most affected by this insurgency.

There are currently between 1.6 and 2.2 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in Nigeria,[44] with at least 1.5 million of them in the states of Borno, Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe.[45] The government's National Emergency Management Agency, with the support of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, has built a number of refugee camps, but as is too often the case, these have been plagued by poor living conditions, are rife with disease, and are vulnerable to attacks and infiltration by terrorists. Refugees have also built ad hoc camps for themselves, often on the outskirts of cities where they have been given or managed to lease land from local farmers. In both cases, however, they have met resistance and fear from established communities who are concerned that Boko Haram militants are using the refugee flow to spread and mount attacks across Nigeria. Indeed, reports of attacks on refugee camps in late 2015 and early 2016 lend credence to this fear.[46] This has prompted communities to refuse to help Muslim refugees, thereby exacerbating the religious distrust already existent in the country.

Furthermore, the living conditions in the camps are suboptimal. Inhabitants face all sorts of shortages, including timber and nails necessary for construction, and access to clean water, medication, and foodstuff.[47] The change in temperature has been difficult for many refugees who have escaped from the northeast, leaving them vulnerable to pneumonia and malaria fever. There have been several documented outbreaks of diarrhea in the Malkohi camp, in Yola, due to contaminated water. Respiratory tract infections further affect 30 per 1,000 people each week.[48] About one in five refugees suffer from severe malnourishment, which disproportionally affects children and nursing mothers. Not to mention the psychological trauma as many IDPs have witnessed or been victims to Boko Haram's brutal methods. Psychological care has been severely lacking in the camps.

The government's response to the humanitarian crisis has been sorely criticized. While there is limited media coverage on the failings of the National Emergency Management Agency, volunteers working in the refugee camps have denounced the corruption and poor management of the agency. An informal camp on the outskirts of Abuja received only one delivery of food in June 2015 including 30 bags of rice, 10 cartons of powdered milk, and 2 bags of salt. This was followed by a letter claiming National Emergency Management Agency had gracefully donated several

times the foodstuff and other essentials. Meanwhile, a Victims Support Fund launched in 2014 by the federal government allegedly holds 59 billion nairas (£189 million) in banks of which less than 10 percent was spent by the end of 2015.[49] A lack of transparency and reporting of donation and expenditures continues to mar the reputation of the most important government-run emergency agency in the country.

According to a prominent activist in Nigeria, the terrible conditions in the refugee camps have created room for radicalization, and the government is failing to keep above the trends.[50] Rape, abuse, and trafficking are rife, and there is little hope for people to return home. Many villages and farms have been mined or booby-trapped and there is limited faith in the army's long-term commitment to the security in the northeast. Fear that Boko Haram will return and take revenge when the army moves out discourages refugees from returning home, even after the government has declared the region to be safe. With no return possible, local communities will eventually have to integrate the refugees, and government support is necessary to facilitate the process and mitigate the possible religious, cultural, and socioeconomic tensions.

In addition to managing an overwhelming influx of refugees from the northeast, Chad, and Cameroon, the government has also had to deal with the rehabilitation and reintegration of hostages freed from Boko Haram. With hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people captured by the militants, there is a real concern of radicalization and terrorist infiltration. Subject to brutal torture and constant attempts at brainwashing, some of the released captives have forgotten their age, name, and identities. Many of the women have been raped and impregnated in an attempt to subdue them and create another generation of Boko Haram. The government's "so-called de-radicalization programmes"[51] for released hostages have been controversial: It is unclear whether the former hostages are captives in the government centers or whether they are free to go. There is also little information regarding the treatment they receive or the length of time they are to remain under surveillance. When and whether the victims of Boko Haram's insanity will be able to return home and how they will be assisted in reintegrating their communities are also very much in doubt. The ordeal for IDPs, refugees, and former hostages is far from over. Buhari's current focus on military operations is necessary to counter Boko Haram, but a care for its victims will be vital in order to avoid a repeat of history.

DECAPITATION STRATEGY

Despite the recent successes of the Nigerian Army, few believe that Boko Haram has been permanently defeated. Insurgencies can last for decades with cells surviving underground and feeding off of popular discontent. Most ideologically driven groups capitalize on social vulnerabilities to recruit members and garner public support. In the case of Boko Haram, however, it is questionable whether it still enjoys the protection of its base communities, many of which have been targeted by attacks over the last three years. Boko Haram's indiscriminate and excessive brutality may have alienated the militants from their fellow Muslims, but the group has proved ever resilient, following the model of many other violent actors in Africa: through pillage, plunder, rape, and terror, the militants continue to rule in remote regions of Nigeria and plan attacks against the people who won't support them.

Boko Haram has largely been driven by its fanatical leader, Abu Shekau, leading to his warrant "dead or alive." Counterterrorism or counterinsurgency strategies have long favored leadership decapitation, a strategy that targets the leadership of organizations with the objective of dismantling or weakening the group: In a study by Patrick Johnson, leadership decapitation occurred in 70 out of 155 counterinsurgency campaigns, or 42.5 percent of the time.[52] The verdict on the effectiveness of decapitation is inconclusive: researchers such as Robert Pape and Bruce Hoffman argue that the tactic is militarily ineffective and can even be politically counterproductive.[53] One concern that was realized with Mohammed Yusuf is the risk of creating a martyr that may stir further support and radicalization among his support base. Getting rid of the head can create competition for leadership but may also provoke the breakup of the organization into several cells that are more difficult to defeat.

Yet as a chosen modus operandi for special forces, decapitation is often preferred as a tactic that undermines the morale of a group and highlights its weaknesses to the public. It is assumed that removing the leadership can disrupt the organizational capability, communication, and chain of command of the insurgency. While this may be true, scholars have found that decapitation is more effective against certain types of organizations. For example, Jenna Jordan claims that the tactic is unproductive against established religious and ideological groups. This is because there is a

higher level of commitment among members who are more heterogeneous than those belonging to ethnic or secessionist groups.[54] Boko Haram would surely fall into this category.

The Nigerian Army has claimed several times that Boko Haram's leader, Abu Shekau, has been killed. The debate over whether the man is dead or alive has gripped the media but seems to have had little effect on the insurgency itself. Shekau, who previously preened in front of cameras taunting President Jonathan and crying threats to the world, has not been seen on video since February 2015. An audio message purporting to feature Shekau was released in September 2015, although doubts remain whether it is really his voice.[55] More recent videos released by the militants have claimed Shekau is alive and still leading the groups, but nobody really seems to know.

The debate over whether Shekau is dead or alive seems to be more of a concern to international players than to the Nigerians themselves. One high-placed foreign diplomat in Abuja discussed his beliefs that Shekau was very much alive and in control of the main faction holding the Chibok girls. Other factions have arisen but with less traction and impact than Shekau's. A British security specialist on the other hand shared a photograph depicting Shekau dead, although he argued that the group was now so factionalized that this was entirely irrelevant. Fatima Akilu acknowledged that it would be easier if Shekau were confirmed to be dead: cult leaders depend on a vow of allegiance and complete obedience. His demise might prompt the membership of Boko Haram to break up. In August 2015, Boko Haram swiftly disputed Chadian president Déby's claims that a man named Mahamat Daoud had replaced Shekau. Many observers simply believe Daoud to be the leader of one faction and not comparable in appeal or impact to the dreaded Shekau.

A new complication however has emerged with the alliance between Boko Haram and Islamic State/ISIS. Shekau and his crew have sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS who is based between Syria and Iraq. This apparent new leadership structure moves the theater of operations outside of Nigeria and beyond the capabilities of the government or the armed forces. Although the chain of command is likely weak and vulnerable to disruption, this new symbolic leader may serve to inspire Boko Haram's militants and galvanize their support base, irrespective of Shekau's existence.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: THE LONG ROAD AHEAD

Buhari's declaration that Boko Haram was technically defeated was welcome by many in Nigeria who have been living in fear of the militants. Boko Haram has indeed been weakened and seems unable to mount sophisticated attacks of the like seen in 2014 and early 2015. The insurgents have since changed tactics, proving themselves ever resilient, a trait we have observed since 2010. The increase in guerilla warfare and suicide attacks continues to claim lives on a regular basis and enables the group to spread its operational theater across the northeast. So far, however, it seems that the threat is contained to the region, which will be a relief to many in the country.

Defeating an insurgency however can be a very long process, and it is unclear at this time whether Buhari and his successors will be able to keep the pressure on Boko Haram, especially in view of the many other political and security problems that threaten Nigeria. Some insurgencies have lasted 30 plus years, with waves of particular brutality in Cambodia, Vietnam, or Colombia. The tenacity of these groups lies in their ideological convictions, access to resources, knowledge of the topography, and, to an extent, local support. In addition to this, Boko Haram benefits from a large network of allies ranging from AQIM to Islamic State/ISIS.

Indeed, Boko Haram has benefited from its position as an organized Islamist group with strong leadership at a time when religious tensions are high in Nigeria, but also in the greater region and to an extent around the world. Furthermore, it has capitalized on the high levels of inequality and poverty in the northeast, which have served to alienate a population, providing the sect with an endless source of recruitment and support. The errors committed by the Nigerian security forces and policy makers have simply made the job easier for the militants. A sustained military presence in the northeast therefore will be successful at defeating Boko Haram only if it is accompanied with a real effort to develop political ties between Abuja and Maiduguri.

Many commentators have focused on the role of community building and social policies in counterinsurgency strategies. While we agree that these play an important role in the final fall of Boko Haram, it is imperative to first set the stage and highlight the domestic factors that have led to the group's rise in the first place. The previous two chapters analyzed the political and economic development of Nigeria over the past 150 years.

Chapter 1 showed that a growing divide between regions and a dearth of responsible and accountable leadership served to politically and economically isolate the inhabitants in the northeast from the rest of the country. This created an opening for competitors to the state, such as Mohammed Yusuf, who could offer hope and basic services to the people. Chapter 2 then examined the role of religious groups in the country, focusing on the competition between Christianity and Islam and the different forms of religious fervor that have engulfed the country at various times. It showed that Boko Haram is neither unique nor unprecedented, but rather the continuation of a trend that marries political discontent with religious sentiment expressed through violent means. This chapter ties together Nigeria's political and religious history to show how it contributed to creating "perfect" conditions for the development of Boko Haram.

Chapter 5 now turns to the dynamics of the Lake Chad region. Boko Haram has taken advantage of the vacuum in governance in the region, capitalizing once again on existing tensions between neighboring countries. It took President Buhari's election and overt efforts toward his counterparts across the border to mount a coordinated counterinsurgency, necessary to defeat the group. The input, or lack thereof, of foreign allies also played a role in the largely dismal performance of the Nigeria intelligence and security forces. Indeed, in 2014 President Jonathan turned to foreign private military providers in what some may call a desperate bid to turn the tides of war and boost his chances at reelection.

Finally, Chapter 6 will return to the Jihadists, arguing that Boko Haram grew into an international threat only in the imaginations of the Western world. This facilitated its fatal alliances with AQIM and ISIS. Indeed, by establishing ties with international terrorist groups that posed a real threat to Western interests, Boko Haram placed itself firmly on the international agenda, condemning it to eventual defeat. The year 2015 was a turning point for the insurgents who managed to soar beyond their greatest expectations. A fast and unexpected rise led to arrogant choices, including the occupation of territory and dependence on position warfare, leaving them open to military defeat. The return to insurgent tactics may sustain the group's longevity for a time until it is ready to resurge as it did already between 2005 and 2009, and again in 2010 after being crushed by the Nigerian security forces, twice.

CHAPTER 5

Regional Security and Cooperation

Although the rise of Boko Haram was principally a Nigerian affair, it was in no small part enabled by a lack of coordination and communication regionally. There has historically been a near total absence of security cooperation as well as much distrust between Nigeria and its northern neighbors, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. This has led to a vacuum of power along their common borders, which Abu Shekau, the leader of the violent sect, has exploited in recent years. A multinational joint task force (MJTF) comprising 7,500 soldiers from the three countries and Benin joined the Nigerian war against Boko Haram in January 2015 with mixed success.

This chapter will explore the relationship between Nigeria and its neighbors over the past 50 years with a view of highlighting the obstacles to security cooperation in the region. It will then examine the rise of Boko Haram as a national threat; assess how and why it has spread into Chad, Cameroon, and Niger; and suggest ways in which the four countries can overcome historical differences to promote security and stability in their corner of West Africa.

THE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The relationship between Nigeria and its neighbors is colored by legacies of colonialism by the French and British empires in the 19th and 20th centuries. The colonization of Nigeria by the British in the early 20th century was in part motivated by an ongoing race for colonies with the

British Empire's oldest nemesis: France. The French encroachment into West Africa forced the British to push northward and add the Sokoto Caliphate to their holdings. In 1914, the caliphate was merged with the existing territories of Yorubaland, the Oil Rivers, and the Middle Belt to form the colony of Nigeria. Meanwhile, France had pursued her expansionist policies in West Africa and in Equatorial Africa. By 1919, Britain's colony was entirely surrounded by French-controlled territories, after the latter had taken over Cameroon from Germany.

These Franco-British relations largely framed Nigeria's regional policies, which at times meant Nigeria chose to refrain from engaging at all with its Francophone neighbors. During the Biafra war, French support for the breakaway faction "constituted a considerable threat to Nigeria"[1] and served to alienate the African state from any former French colony. France's continued interference in regional politics further exacerbated tensions between the African countries: in 1973, France spearheaded the creation of the Exclusive Communauté Economique d'Afrique Occidentale (CEAO) to counterbalance Nigeria's (and arguably British) influence in West Africa.[2] The first president of the organization explained that "the new Community should be considered neither as a *machination* nor as a *machine de guerre* against Anglophone West Africa."[3] This of course reassured nobody. The CEAO also did not stop Nigeria from becoming France's biggest trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa in 1975.[4] That same year, Nigeria's brainchild, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), was created, reflecting the country's desire to further its regional influence via economic integration. Despite the flailing success of ECOWAS, the expansion of Nigeria's oil production and the dependence of its neighbors on oil supply have effectively locked the economies of Togo, Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon together.

Britain's relationship with its former African colonies on the other hand is relatively aloof, which leads Michael Onda to argue that the empire has surrendered its global preeminence to another Anglophone power: the United States.[5] Britain remains an important trading power in Nigeria nevertheless and supported the federal government during the Biafra war. On the other hand, David Cameroon's scorn over recently implemented antihomosexual laws in Nigeria and his government's tacit complicity in the political elite's money-laundering efforts have not been appreciated by

Nigerians, who view the British-Nigerian relationship as one based around hypocrisy and convenience. Nigerian financial columnist Femi Aribisale declared that there is no "special relationship" between Nigeria and the United Kingdom other than a mutual degree of suspicion.[6]

The historical narrative is important in setting foreign policy and deciding on a country's alliances. Indeed, security, which is a central concern for the state, is "a historically formed discourse"[7] that plays a role in the construction of a national identity. It is natural that African states would turn to their former colonizers for alliances and support in a bid to consolidate their position both regionally and internationally. The old adage "my friend's enemies are my enemies" is therefore used strategically by countries in West Africa to reach capability parity between the arguably more powerful Anglophone Nigeria and its Francophone neighbors.[8] This explains to a large extent the regional alliance between Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger and their difficulties cooperating with Nigeria both historically, during the Biafra war, and in the present security crisis. Indeed, France and her allies supported and assisted the breakaway region of Biafra, which was directly against Nigeria's security and strategic interests. However, a series of ECOWAS defense protocols in the late 1970s and 1980s went a certain way toward easing tensions between the West African states following the Biafra war. The treaties also shifted Nigeria's strategic focus from inward-looking to outward-looking interventions in regional security matters.[9]

BORDER DISPUTES

As the single largest unit in West Africa at independence, and undoubtedly the most economically and politically powerful country in the region, Nigeria has been cautious not to antagonize its bordering states. The legacy of colonialism, and in particular the seemingly arbitrary carving up of states at the Berlin Conference in 1885, left a number of border disputes among the West African neighbors.[10] In addition, any military escalation between Nigeria and one of its Francophone neighbors might bring in the overzealous French to the rescue of their old colony—indeed France intervened in African states no less than 30 times between 1963 and 1993.[11] In a desire to avoid a military confrontation, Nigeria has pursued a policy of

noninterference or "good neighborliness"[12] to the point of near apathy vis-à-vis bordering states. This has at times led to the "occupation of lands belonging to Nigeria by armed neighboring countries."[13]

Although Nigeria has ongoing border disputes with both Benin and Equatorial Guinea, its most significant source of neighborly contention comes from Chad. Nigeria and Chad do not share a land border but rather are separated by Lake Chad, whose farmland and water sources are quickly shrinking due to environmental degradation. In addition, Lake Chad contains valuable oil deposits that are worth fighting for, and the lake is a primary source of water for both countries. The rapid population growth in the area and episodes of drought have already led to water shortages in northern Nigeria. The lack of boundary demarcation on the basin area has also prompted clashes over fishing rights that has brought in the Chadian Army. Although the border was drawn by the colonial powers, there are no markers to indicate where these are physically located. Chadian refugees and bandits were crossing freely into Nigeria during the political crisis in Chad in the 1980s,[14] although the trend has recently been reversed in view of the growing aggression of Boko Haram in the northeast of Nigeria. Any future political crisis in Chad, a distinct possibility considering the undemocratic reign of its president, Idriss Déby, could spark a civil war with an ensuing humanitarian disaster in Nigeria.

The relationship between Cameroon and Nigeria has historically been characterized as contentious and at times even hostile,[15] especially over the issue of the disputed Bakassi Peninsula in the southeastern tip of Nigeria—far from the troubles in the northeast. The disputed territory measures around 50 square kilometers but led to a military standoff in 1993. The International Court of Justice ruled that the area should fall under the sovereign rule of Cameroon in the 2002 judgment, which was promptly rejected by Nigeria. The situation was resolved in 2006 when President Obasanjo agreed to pull out the Nigerian troops following UN-sponsored talks, and relations between the two countries have since normalized.

The main security threat for Nigeria is arguably not its border disputes, but recently the porous and ungoverned nature of its frontiers. Vogt and Omede eloquently explain that "the Nigerian border appears to be the most vulnerable spot and the nation's achilles' heel because of Nigeria's self complacent attitude toward her security, based on the false premise that

Nigeria is bordered by smaller and relatively weaker but friendly states which do not constitute any real threat to Nigeria's national security."[16] The country shares over 4,000 km with its neighbors: 1,500 km with Niger and Chad in the north; 1,700 km with Cameroon in the east; 1,000 km with Benin in the west; and on top of this, an additional 700 km of coastline. There are 84 regular routes into the country, and an estimated 1,497 illegal ones that are impossible to monitor under current circumstances.[17] Smugglers, terrorists, refugees, and laborers circulate freely, as Nigeria is unable to secure its borders due to a lack of manpower, technology, and cross-border cooperation, not to mention political will. This security dilemma is replicated throughout West Africa. Unfortunately, the relative distrust between Nigeria and its neighbors "has obstructed the potency of bilateral and multilateral attempts at addressing issues of common concern."[18] The recent incursions of Boko Haram into Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, however, have changed the security situation, with the neighbors finally cooperating—albeit half-heartedly at times—in order to curtail the terrorist threat on their territories.

RISK PERCEPTION AND REALITY

Until 2014, Boko Haram was perceived as mainly a Nigerian problem, a product of internal political, social, and economic grievances inside the country. With few raids into neighboring countries, the terrorist group was a negligible threat to Niger, Cameroon, and Chad, who had no interest in cooperating with Nigeria to curtail the violence. The kidnapping of a French family in Cameroon Extreme North province in 2013, allegedly by Boko Haram, was hardly surprising, considering that the area is virtually ungoverned and is perceived to be within the operational realm of Boko Haram and Ansaru.

The perception of a risk as a real danger is not an objective condition, as explained by David Campbell in *Writing Security*. Indeed, it is the portrayal of the "other" as "alien, subversive, dirty or sick,"[19] which prompts a public outcry and a government response. While Boko Haram was camping on the Nigerian side of the borders, the militants were a risk that remained distant to much of the population in neighboring Chad and Cameroon. As a result, there was no need to cooperate or mobilize forces to support the Nigerian

soldiers, even though their failure increased the risk that Boko Haram could expand its area of operations and regional influence. It was only in late 2014 and early 2015 that Chad and Cameroon experienced the destructive ambitions of the militants firsthand, and began to portray the group as a threat to regional security beyond Nigeria.

Many other African countries reciprocate the early attitude of Chad and Cameroon, as national sovereignty is practically sacrosanct to them. Technological advances in communication and transportation, however, have eroded the perceived "hard" borders between the countries, transforming domestic threats into regional and sometimes even global matters.

SOVEREIGNTY AND COOPERATION

Africa's reverence of international legal sovereignty is largely due to the history of colonialism and Western intervention into African politics and territories. As a result, the charter of the African Union (AU) and the charter of Organization of African Unity (OAU) before it hold the respect for national sovereignty as one of the primordial rules that no member can overtly violate. Indeed, Article 2(1) of the charter of the OAU explains that the purpose of the organization is to "defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity and their independence." The idea of sovereignty was reformulated by the AU that allows for "the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity."[20] Although the AU has rarely taken military action to hold African leaders accountable for these crimes, it has recently been more proactive politically, suggesting that the reverence of sovereignty still applies, albeit with a new sense of common responsibility.

Boko Haram's success in West Africa has been attributed to an extent to the relatively limited military capabilities of the West African countries, the lack of intelligence coordination, and the untouchable approach to national sovereignty. However, small and relatively modest irregular forces have repeatedly overcome more modern armies, with Arreguín-Toft demonstrating that weak actors now win more than half the time in asymmetric warfare.[21] Certainly, members of Boko Haram have made use of the porous borders to smuggle in weapons and people inside, but equally

to escape from the Nigerian troops who may not pursue them into neighboring countries. In December 2013, a state official in Borno accused the Cameroonian authorities of failing to arrest or give chase to Boko Haram militants who fled after carrying out attacks in Nigeria.[22] The territories along the borders have for all intents and purposes become sanctuaries for the terrorists fleeing the security forces.

There is a lack of infrastructure and security along the Nigeria–Cameroon border that has contributed to the establishment of militant training camps, some of which were dismantled in 2015. Nigerian officials in 2013 disclosed plans to gain permission from the French and Cameroonian governments to carry out offensives against Boko Haram along the common border, without being accused of violating the country's sovereignty.[23] Cooperation between Nigeria and Cameroon has been stifled by accusations from both sides of military ineptitude and lack of political will. Biya's government has allegedly voiced concerns about the Nigerian Army's poor human rights record when dealing with suspected Boko Haram members—although the Cameroonian Army's reputation has also suffered from similar accusations.[24] Nigeria in turn has blamed Cameroon for being "too passive in the fight against the insurgents and allowed Boko Haram to use its territory as a rear base and supply route."[25]

Although Cameroon has insisted that Boko Haram is a domestic Nigerian issue that should not be addressed with foreign troops, the country has recently experienced a stream of Nigerian refugees fleeing the violence. According to a report released by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Boko Haram attacks have affected at least six million people in the states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe, and over 300,000 people are currently internally displaced. These numbers, however, exclude refugees who have fled across the borders. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that 28,000 Nigerians have crossed into neighboring Cameroon to escape the violence.[26] The situation has evidently developed into a human security problem for the former French colony. In January 2015, the spokesman for the Cameroonian Army voiced his frustration with the Nigerian Army, who were allegedly deserting their posts and leaving behind weapons that the militants would then pick up: "We're getting fed up with the situation," Colonel Didier Badjeck said, "Nigeria has to take its responsibilities. We cannot support the weight of a war we don't even know

the whys and wherefores."[27] Responding to Cameroon's appeal for international help, Chad sent several hundred troops to support the Cameroonian Army, which is facilitated by a shared colonial heritage and French support for both countries.[28]

The Chadian Army is reputedly among the best in Africa and enjoys the military support of the French armed forces. The two countries worked together to expel Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) militants from Mali in 2012–2013. Although Chad had until recently been less directly affected by Boko Haram, the country depends hugely on imports coming in through the Cameroonian town of Douala, and it exports oil through a pipeline that crosses the Nigerian state of Adamawa. As a result, Chad has been proactive in defending its neighbors from any movement that could destabilize it and adversely affect the country's economy.

Chad's participation in the fight against the militants could be decisive in changing the tide of war in Nigeria. Indeed, Chadian troops are properly equipped and trained in desert warfare. Additionally, 950 French soldiers assist them, split into three military bases around Chad. It is important to note that the French military presence in the country was instigated by the invitation of the Chadian president in 1986 to support peace and stability efforts.[29] Furthermore, Chadian forces are trained to use sophisticated vehicles and helicopters in rapid deployment that are essential for a counterinsurgency campaign in remote and unfriendly terrain.[30]

Nonetheless, the alleged military advantages of the Chadian Army have not yet sufficed to defeat Boko Haram. In March 2015, President Déby echoed the Cameroonian position in his criticism of the Nigerian government. He "accused Nigeria of downplaying the threat from Boko Haram and failing to cooperate with the regional coalition battling the jihadis, saying there had been zero contact between the armies."[31] The lack of cooperation means that the Chadian Army has had to push Boko Haram militants out of the same towns several times, as the Nigerian Army has failed to step in: the Chadians cannot stay to secure any territory inside of Nigeria themselves for fear of violating principles of sovereignty and being perceived as an occupying enemy. Nigeria, just like other African nations, is very protective of its territorial sovereignty, and as far as possible would prefer to avoid looking weak or dependent on its neighbors.

Niger has also mobilized in the regional military alliance against Boko Haram deploying troops along the common border. It has joined its Francophone allies in criticizing the Nigerian Army, this time for running away from Boko Haram fighters, an allegation that Nigerian general Chris Olukolade vehemently refuted. As explained previously, the Nigerian armed forces felt hamstrung by the lack of cross-border cooperation: Not only have their neighbors refused to chase the militants or allow the soldiers access to pursue Boko Haram fleeing from Nigeria, but also they do not even patrol their own borders properly; they also enthusiastically and gratuitously criticize the Nigerian Army for its shortcomings, thereby humiliating the entire country. In this context of mutual distrust and competition, it is no wonder cross-border cooperation has been so arduous.

WESTERN "ASSISTANCE"

One of the reasons for which Nigeria is forced to cooperate, albeit in a limited fashion, with its "slanderous" neighbors is the lack of foreign assistance in its struggle with Boko Haram. Its former colonizer, Great Britain, has maintained a low profile, offering military experts and training but little more before the election of Muhammadu Buhari to the presidency. The European country has since changed its tone, with the Africa minister James Duddridge claiming that "it would be inconceivable for the UK not to do more in the northeast to support Nigeria."[32]

Furthermore, the United States has been reluctant to assist the country militarily, despite its strong influence in Nigeria, which is in part due to the poor reputation of the armed forces.[33] The Leahy law, passed in 2008, prohibits the U.S. government from providing equipment and even training to foreign troops who commit human rights abuses. Reports by reputable outlets such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have given evidence of the police and military "committing human rights and humanitarian law violations," including extrajudicial killings, torture, and the targeting of civilians.[34] A 2015 report released by Amnesty International accused the Nigerian Army of being responsible for the deaths of 7,000 civilians by "torture, starvation, disease or (who) were simply shot" and for arresting "at least 20,000 people in north-east Nigeria" since 2011.[35] As a result of this track record of human rights abuses, President Obama blocked

the sale of Cobra helicopters from Israel "amid concerns in Washington about Nigeria's ability to use and maintain that type of helicopter in its effort against Boko Haram, and continuing worries about Nigeria's protection of civilians when conducting military operations."[36]

In addition, the U.S. claims that members of Boko Haram have infiltrated the Nigerian Army provoked indignation in the African country. As a result of these allegations, the American government has been reluctant to provide Nigeria with the necessary relevant intelligence to combat Boko Haram, out of fear that its sources could be compromised.[37] The perceived culture of corruption within the Nigerian Army and the failure of the Jonathan government to properly equip and train its own troops have further discouraged the United States from stepping in. Goodluck Jonathan retaliated by cancelling a U.S. training program for the newly created 143rd Nigerian Army Battalion in December 2014. Once again, an atmosphere of mutual distrust and nonassistance has poisoned the relationship between two key allies and impeded the military's advance against Boko Haram.

It has in fact fallen to the French to oversee the regional cooperation among the West African countries and provide military training and equipment to the armies of Chad and Cameroon. In 2014, France hosted a summit in Paris to facilitate a meeting between the presidents of Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Benin, and Chad and "create a global and regional action plan."[38] President François Hollande announced that the countries had agreed on "coordinating intelligence, sharing information […] border surveillance, a military presence notably around Lake Chad and the capacity to intervene in case of danger."[39] France will provide logistical support and intelligence, including aerial surveillance along the borders with Chad and Cameroon. It already offered a number of security advisers to Nigeria in 2014 following the kidnapping of the Chibok girls. The European state has been adamant, however, that this is not its war and there will be no French boots on the ground in Nigeria.[40]

France's leadership in the anti–Boko Haram coalition is both encouraging and limiting. Nigeria needs external support to mobilize international aid and regional cooperation but has been facing cultural political hurdles in its neighborly affairs. France, however, has little diplomatic influence in Abuja, and although it enjoys stronger relations with its former colonies, it is still viewed with suspicion by local media outlets that have queried

François Hollande's intentions. On the other hand, French researcher Pérouse de Montclos has criticized Britain's low profile and suggested that the former colonial power should be a more active participant in the regional and international efforts against Boko Haram.[41] An academic source close to the military argued that U.S. military training of Nigerian officers has not translated into effective results, particularly in Maiduguri where the officers were deployed. He adds that French efforts have also been relatively ineffective and that only the British have managed to transform their modest "assistance" into a measurable impact on the ground.[42]

BOKO HARAM'S LONG ARM

Since 2009, Boko Haram has been principally a Nigerian domestic issue, raising few headlines in international news outlets. The Nigerian Army enjoys a relatively good reputation abroad, despite its domestic shortcomings, participating in and even leading peacekeeping efforts in Mali, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. The question of regional stability has only really emerged in 2014, as Abu Shekau broadened the operational area of his militant group, pursuing foreigners in the vicinity and endorsing cross-border raids in Niger, Cameroon, and Chad.

The Nigerian government declared a state of emergency in 2013 after Boko Haram increased the intensity of its attacks in the northeast of the country. The militant group underwent a strategic transformation following the 2012 Islamist occupation of Northern Mali. For over 12 months, AQIM and its sister group the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa were able to forge links with Islamist groups worldwide whose leaders met freely in Timbuktu and Gao while their militants exchanged ideas in terrorist training camps, and learned to fix Kalashnikovs, make bombs, and launch rockets.[43] Several members were also sent to training camps run by Al-Shabaab in Somalia, where they were taught to build improvised explosive devices and how best to use suicide bombers.[44] As a result, Abu Shekau built up his organization drawing inspiration from like-minded-groups. From 2013 onward, Boko Haram carried out multiple suicide attacks and targeted foreigners for kidnap and ransom. It also increased its arsenal, a move facilitated by its new friendships with international smugglers and the

easy availability of weaponry from Libya since the overthrow of Colonel Gadhafi in 2011.

Although Boko Haram has mainly carried out attacks in Nigeria, it is important to note that its recruitment base has never been exclusively Nigerian. A significant number of its members are ethnically Kanuri, a group that is mainly located in the northeast of the country and across the border in southeast Niger, western Chad, and northern Cameroon. This is not to say that Boko Haram is necessarily an ethnically mobilized organization. But as Kanuri are overrepresented in Boko Haram, they are also more likely to be affected as a group by military reprisals: The killing of founder Mohammed Yusuf and 800 Boko Haram members by Nigerian security forces in 2009 did seem to pit the government against its Kanuri population.[45] According to African analyst Michael Baca, the Kanuri shape the upper echelons of Boko Haram's hierarchy, although "neither Shekau nor his lieutenants regard themselves as Kanuri nationalists tasked with championing the parochial interests of their ethnicity."[46]

Boko Haram has also attracted a number of militants from neighboring countries, leading to accusations that it is a "foreign" or "un-Nigerian" organization. One of its leaders, Khalid al-Barnawi, is reportedly from Niger originally and has trained in Algeria.[47] Mamman Nur, another important personality in Boko Haram, is from Cameroon and allegedly trained with Al-Shabaab.[48] The terrorist organization has also been recruiting heavily in Chad, Cameroon, and Niger: analyst Jacob Zenn claims that Boko Haram has been recruiting in northern Cameroon since 2012 and has since been carrying out local kidnappings to raise funds.[49] There is also evidence of a Chadian section of Boko Haram from a video released in October 2014 and claims by the federal government that Chadians were among the Boko Haram insurgents killed in Biu in 2015.[50] Boko Haram has also reportedly been recruiting ethnic Kanuri in refugee camps near the Niger town of Diffa.[51]

Boko Haram appears to be broadening its operations in the Lake Chad regions of Cameroon, Niger, and Chad in recent years. The militant group has raided towns along the border with Cameroon, where it has established supply routes to its bases in the Sambisa Forest. Since December 2014, Boko Haram has launched increasingly lethal attacks against border towns and garrisons in Cameroon and has kidnapped over a hundred people.[52] In

January 2015, Abu Shekau released a video in which he directly threatened the Cameroonian president Paul Biya warning that the country "will taste what has befallen Nigeria."[53] He also threatened Niger president Mahamadou Issoufou for supporting France after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris and in another video attacked Chadian president Déby for contributing troops to the MJTF.[54]

Analyst Pérouse de Montclos has been particularly critical of the multinational approach to Boko Haram, warning that it could internationalize the problem and attract retaliatory attacks in neighboring Chad and Niger.[55] Boko Haram had previously carried few and limited attacks outside of Nigeria but has been increasing its operational theater since the intervention of external armies. The militant group released a video in January 2015 in which it promised to cease attacking Chad and Niger if the two countries withdrew from the coalition. It is difficult to say whether Boko Haram's ambitions extend beyond Nigeria, as the organization is largely a product of domestic problems. Abu Shekau did publicly proclaim his allegiance to the Islamic State in March 2015. Nonetheless, this could also be interpreted as a PR move or an ideological alignment, as Boko Haram's leader is notorious for maintaining total control over his men, and it is unclear how much al-Baghdadi exercises his influence in northeast Nigeria. In April 2015, Shekau announced that Boko Haram would be renamed the "Islamic State of West Africa," a politico-religious move that suggests a pan-Islamist ambition that goes beyond Nigeria's borders.

THE MULTINATIONAL JOINT TASK FORCE

In the past two years, Boko Haram has transformed itself from a domestic insurgency to a regional threat, affecting the stability of Nigeria's neighbors through a series of cross-border attacks. In addition, its alliance with the Islamic State has put the Nigerian group into the category of global jihadi movements, and therefore of immediate concern to the United States and its allies. Recognizing an urgent need to curtail Boko Haram's growth and legitimacy, and the Nigerian Army's inability to cope alone with the problem, the African community was finally mobilized in 2015. In March of that year, the African Union Peace and Security Council approved the

reinforcement of a 7,500-strong MJTF for an initial period of 12 months, renewable. Specifically, the MJTF is expected to conduct military operations, coordinate at interstate level, patrol borders, stop the flow of arms, and find abducted persons under the aegis of the United Nations and the AU.

The task force was originally set up in 1998 to combat transnational organized crime in the Lake Chad Basin, and was reactivated in 2012 to coordinate the effort against Boko Haram.[56] However, failure to agree on a legal framework for the cross-border operations severely affected communication, and in January 2015, the MJTF headquarters in Baga, northeastern Nigeria, fell to the insurgents who were able to outgun the troops posted in the town, leading them to abandon the base. Subsequently, the Lake Chad Basin countries, supported by their allies and the AU, decided to set up a joint combat force, a move hailed by AU commission chair Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma who explained that "collective, creative and decisive response" was necessary to curtail the activities of Boko Haram.[57] The initiative was equally celebrated by UN secretary Ban Ki-moon, who agreed that "those terrorists should be addressed with a regional and international cooperation."[58]

Although Nigeria has rejected the presence of UN peacekeeping troops in its territory, the MJTF, which consists of soldiers from the Lake Chad Basin Commission (Chad, Cameroon, and Niger) plus Benin, is largely funded by UN-sourced special funds.[59] The United States has also pledged a meager $5 million to support the initiative in its fight against Boko Haram, while the United Kingdom and France are coordinating an "intelligence fusion cell" with the Nigerians.[60] Buhari's election appears to have galvanized support for a common engagement against Abu Shekau and his cohort, although the MJTF has nonetheless faced problems of communication, coordination, and cooperation, as evidenced by the complaints of the respective military leaders in Cameroon, Chad, and Nigeria mentioned above.[61] A lack of funding and financial commitments by all parties toward the MJTF is likely to be blamed for many of the above-mentioned failures.

Another point of contention for Nigeria has been the leadership of the MJTF. Naturally suspicious of foreign troops in the country, President Buhari, as did his predecessor Goodluck Jonathan, insisted on maintaining control over the military venture rather than allow for a six-month rotation

of the command and control structure. After extensive negotiations, the main contributors of troops agreed that a Nigerian would hold the position of force commander until the end of the mission. A Cameroonian would be appointed as the deputy force commander and a Chadian would occupy the position of chief of staff for an initial period of 12 months. A summit of the heads of state and government of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin in June 2015 led to a mutual agreement to donate an additional $30 million and fund the equipment for the headquarters, now in N'Djamena. Buhari promised $100 million in initial funds although he acknowledged that long-term funding was "still a major issue."[62] President Buhari's conciliatory tone and his pledge upon his inauguration to "consult regularly with heads of government of our immediate neighborhood"[63] are likely to improve relations between the collaborating countries, an important step toward defeating Boko Haram.

Between February and March 2015, the MJTF and Nigerian Army reclaimed 36 towns across three states according to the Nigerian government. Michael Nwankpa, a visiting fellow at the Baker Institute, assesses that the joint effort is responsible for "wrestling lands from Boko Haram's control and killing a number of insurgents."[64] Although Boko Haram has been on the defensive since early 2015, the credit for the counterinsurgency's strategic advances must also be attributed to the involvement of international mercenary forces who have been contracted to the Nigerian Army since at least November 2014.

MERCENARIES IN THE NIGERIAN ARMY

Media reports of the presence of "hundreds of mercenaries" in Nigeria started to emerge in late 2014.[65] The dramatic shift of fortunes in March 2015 saw the Nigerian Army regain territory from Boko Haram in Borno State, solidifying rumors that Nigeria had gained a "secret weapon." Indeed, in the run-up to the presidential elections, suspicious of his neighbors and without the necessary assistance from his "allies," Goodluck Jonathan made the unusual choice of turning to foreign mercenaries. This last-bid effort to reverse the conflict before his electoral defeat has arguably turned out to be one of his most strategically effective decisions.

The presence of mercenaries in any African country is highly controversial in view of the continent's experiences with mercenary-led coups and attempted coups in the Comoros, the Seychelles, and Equatorial Guinea, not to mention the havoc foreign mercenaries wreaked in Zaire and Rhodesia. The use of white contractors is especially harrowing, as it is reminiscent of apartheid-era South Africa, when the white government sent its military agents to undermine governments across the continent. That being said, Jonathan's choice is likely the result of an extensive cost–benefit analysis made in a foxhole. With an evidently demoralized army, being denied necessary hardware from his allies, and distrustful of his neighbors, turning to private military companies with a successful track record in fighting counterinsurgencies and a deadline to get their mission accomplished and leave the country does have a certain appeal. In addition, Jonathan appears to have privileged African-based private military companies such as STTEP and Pilgrims that have experience operating on the continent and are sensitive to the political situation of the country.

According to Eeben Barlow, chairman of the private security company STTEP International and former CEO of the infamous private military company Executive Outcomes, Nigerian authorities subcontracted his firm in December "to train a Nigerian unit to find and rescue the kidnapped Chibok School girls."[66] The mission allegedly included posting 100 men in Nigeria at a price of $400 per day.[67] It since morphed into "an aggressive strike force,"[68] and contractors assisted the Nigerian forces in combat, despite assurance by the Nigerian government that they serve mainly as "technical advisers." One contractor revealed that mercenaries were sometimes embedded with the mobile striking force, but that their main role was limited to training and mentorship.[69]

The presence of foreign military experts has been particularly important in boosting morale in the Nigerian Army. A source on the ground described the inclusion of mercenaries as having a discernable effect on the troops, highlighting the challenges that the army has faced in getting access to the necessary hardware, equipment, and provisions to sustain its assault on the insurgents. On the other hand, the Nigerian military has also been likened to "magpies" by foreign consultants who reported that they have a collection of the most modern military gadgets but make neither the effort to learn how to use them nor any investment in their upkeep.[70] STTEP's services

also included an intelligence package and an air wing for the operations that integrated "CASVAC, MEDVAC, resupply runs, transporting troops, and even providing air support for the strike force."[71] This not only acted as a force multiplier but also went a long way to build confidence and morale among the Nigerian soldiers. The contractors have made a point of maintaining a low profile and have credited the Nigerian Army for the recent gains: "The credit goes to the Nigerian Army, who were supported by the strike force we trained" said Eeben Barlow.[72]

Since the arrival of the mercenaries, the Nigerian armed forces have made considerable gains. In March 2015, the army launched a successful attack against Boko Haram's headquarters in Gwoza, near the Mandara Mountains along the Chad border. Militants hiding in the Sambisa Forest have also been put under sustained pressure by the Nigerian Army, and in April 2015, several Boko Haram camps were captured and hundreds of hostages were rescued. The Sambisa Forest is considered to be one of the biggest hurdles in the fight against the insurgents: With an area of about 60,000 square kilometers and spanning three states, the forest has become a hideout for the Islamists and is heavily mined.[73] The recent release of hostages also appears to confirm suspicions that the kidnapped girls from nearby Chibok were at one point held in Sambisa Forest, and may still be hidden in the area. The Nigerian government has known for a long time that the area was being used as a base for Boko Haram militants, but without the necessary support, intelligence, and expertise, the demoralized military was reluctant to storm the dense and dangerous forest. Recent access to expertise such as combat trackers trained by the private military companies has provided the Nigerian Army with critical intelligence about the insurgents' armament, the speed at which they are traveling, and the direction they are going in. As a result, troops are able to pursue militants or "leap-frog forward,"[74] thereby cutting off their retreat in an otherwise hostile natural environment.

The apparent overhaul of the Nigerian armed forces is also important in terms of psychological warfare. Boko Haram has enjoyed a reputation of ruthlessness and is perceived to be better armed than Nigerian troops—an image upheld by media reports As a result, some soldiers have preferred to flee rather than face such an invincible foe, undermining the population's faith in their so-called protectors. The presence of mercenaries, with their

known expertise in bush war and counterinsurgency and their supply of modern weaponry and air support, not only boosts the morale and performance of the Nigerian troops, but equally plays on the psychology of militants who find that the tables are now turned. The insurgents, used to encountering a known adversary in the Nigerian armed forces, have yet to adapt, and may not be able to do so. Barlow acknowledges the importance of psychological warfare and explains that the "troops need to develop their aggression level to such a point that the enemy fears them. Aggressive pursuit is aimed at initiating contact as heavily with the enemy as possible."[75]

The mercenaries and private military companies involved in the counterinsurgency are operating upon the invitation of the Nigerian government that contracted, or subcontracted, their services. Cooperation between the armed forces and the foreign agents appears to have been successful so far. The presence of companies such as STTEP and Pilgrims is viewed as legitimate—a decision of the elected head of state with the support of the military leadership. In addition, their expertise and experience working with African armies have facilitated the training programs, not to mention their supply of much-needed hardware support. Barlow described the relationship "with the Nigerian government and the Nigerian Armed Forces (as) very good, and as fellow Africans, they recognize the value we have added thus far at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels."[76] This has not stopped international political and media condemnation, however, at the appearance once again of "racist mercenaries"[77] on African soil.

On the other hand, Barlow and other sources on the ground make no mention of cooperation or communication with the MJTF. It is likely that coordination between the Nigerian, Chadian, Cameroonian, and Benin forces takes place at a higher level, and that the contractors are in Nigeria with the sole purpose of training and supporting the Nigerian armed forces, not the MJTF. As mentioned previously, Jonathan and Buhari are keen to operate as independently from their neighbors and allies as possible, but appear to trust the finite help of private military companies.

STTEP's three-month contract with the Nigerian government expired in March 2015, and it is unclear whether it will be renewed under President Buhari's leadership. If the MJTF succeeds in cooperating efficiently and respectfully with each other, it may be that the foreign contractors have

completed their part, and can now leave the country in the hands of the national armed forces. Boko Haram is, for now, on the run, and the foreign contractors appear to have bought the Nigerian government some time to implement desperately needed economic and military reforms to effectively undermine the armed group's political aspirations in the future. President Buhari stated in December 2015 that the enemy was "technically defeated." In a sense, he is correct, as the militants have been pushed back from the territories they held, but equally have resorted to tried-and-tested tactics guerilla tactics. Boko Haram is a resilient organization. Its recent use of suicide attacks—especially using female and underage victims in the Lake Chad region and in neighboring countries—has been an effective tool of terror against the local population and is difficult to prevent.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: STRATEGIC ASPECTS TO REGIONAL COORDINATION

Under Jonathan's leadership, the Nigerian Army was not able to defeat Boko Haram on its own. Furthermore, the militant group has morphed in the last three years into a serious threat both in the country and across the borders, and recently internationalized its presence by forging a strategic alliance with the Islamic State. The continued activities of Boko Haram, its splinter groups, and its allies suggest that the government's strategies need to be revisited.

Boko Harm killed over 15,000 people between 2009 and 2015. The violence has escalated in brutality and has become increasingly indiscriminate. Militants have resorted to beheadings, mass rapes, and kidnappings, evidenced in the mass graves found in deserted towns and the tales of rescued hostages. Furthermore, Boko Haram's leader Abu Shekau has openly threatened Cameroon, Niger, and Chad and led cross-border operations in each country. What is perhaps the most shocking is how a relatively local sect has managed to reach such regional and global prominence. Although the Nigerian government and armed forces are guilty of underestimating the threat and responding haphazardly, the lack of international support and regional cooperation display a gross misunderstanding of the danger posed by violent groups.

Although the following chapter will focus on the role of Boko Haram within the greater war on terror, it is important to highlight the obstacles to

regional security cooperation in Africa. As demonstrated above, Nigeria's historical relations with its Francophone neighbors have been fraught with suspicion and discord. In addition, the linguistic differences pose further logistical and cultural challenges that are difficult to overcome in any environment, as evidenced in NATO and peacekeeping operations all over the world. Effective cooperation relies on political will, driven by a sense of urgency and mutual interest, and until recently, none of the countries involved gave any indication of either. Nigeria even invited foreign mercenaries into the country rather than develop any security interdependence with its neighbors.

Recent efforts to coordinate military operations between the West African countries signal a new high in regional relations. Buhari's election and conciliatory tone appeal to the international community and have been welcomed by the leaders of Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. On the other hand, security analyst Freedom Onuoha points out that the Nigerian Army's focus on and failures in the war against Boko Haram risk undermining Nigeria's position as a leader in maintaining peace and security in Africa. Nigeria is a leading contributor of peacekeepers to the ECOWAS Monitoring Group and the United Nations, but its internal security dilemma and reorientation toward domestic affairs risk weakening the respective institutions.[78] Indeed, since 2013 Nigeria has pulled out some of its soldiers from the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali to focus on the insurgency in northeastern Nigeria.

The Nigerian armed forces, supported by foreign contractors, have recently turned the tide on Boko Haram. This suggests that an effective counterinsurgency strategy and relevant hardware and intelligence deployed earlier could have sufficed to contain, if not defeat, the security threat that the group has become. Over the past three years, however, Boko Haram has grown into a regional threat, operating in multiple countries and receiving funding and fighters from outside the immediate area. The situation requires more than a single nation's initiatives with the help of mercenaries. The West African countries urgently need to overcome their mutual suspicions, which are often not founded upon actual threats to each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity but rather are rooted in cultural differences. The new counterterrorism strategy developed by ECOWAS and the MJTF are encouraging steps toward regional coordination. Cooperation between the states' political and military leaders is likely to be tested in the ongoing war

on terror, and will require ongoing confidence-building exercises in order to sustain an environment of peace and stability necessary for the economic prosperity of West Africa.

CHAPTER 6

Boko Haram and the Global Jihad

Islamist terrorism has increased its worldwide presence and ambitions since the 2003 war in Iraq, an event that coincides with, albeit is not related to, the emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Although local conditions have led to the rise of each individual organization, there is a global perception that these groups operate along similar lines and share a common goal. Akin to Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations," the global war on terror portrayed by the Western media and policy makers appears to be setting Judeo-Christian values against an Islamist expansionist agenda.

There is convincing evidence that Boko Haram has been influenced by like-minded organizations and has corresponded and even trained with groups such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al-Shabaab. In addition, its leader Abu Shekau has expressed his support both for Al Qaeda and for the Islamic State/ISIS, even though both groups are now in competition with one another. Although the above-mentioned groups have expanded their territorial ambitions over the last few years, Boko Haram has remained regionally focused, with few attacks carried out beyond its immediate area of influence. While Al Qaeda and the Islamic State/ISIS have attacked and threatened foreigners and neighboring governments such as Saudi Arabia, Boko Haram has been largely antiestablishment until very recently. Strategically, it has mostly targeted small villages and government symbols inside Nigeria and across the border. This suggests that Boko Haram should be considered and treated as a local insurgency or rebel

group rather than belonging to the so-called trend of Islamist terrorist groups.

The former president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, nonetheless sought to portray Boko Haram as a terrorist group within the so-called global war on terror currently waged by the United States, the United Kingdom, and their allies. The familiar rhetoric of the war on terror is intended to draw resources and support from other countries in the government's struggle with the insurgents. This chapter explores the relationship between Boko Haram and Islamist terrorist groups in this "war on terror." It suggests that like-minded organizations have given the Nigerian insurgents the opportunity to develop their strategy and media exposure and expand their network beyond their capabilities. It argues, however, that Boko Haram is not that easily comparable to other groups and instead must be understood within the geopolitical context of the war on terror.

UNDERSTANDING THE WAR ON TERROR

The era of modern terrorism and the war on terror began on September 11, 2001, with the attack on the Twin Towers in New York. This horrific event was orchestrated by Osama bin Laden, a Saudi national and founder of an Islamist group Al Qaeda (translated from Arabic as "the Base"). The organization was initially set up in the late 1980s—following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—with the objective of ridding Muslim countries of foreign and especially Western influence. Run according to bin Laden's ideology, Al Qaeda sought to carry on the "holy war" at the end of the Cold War and target American interests worldwide, leading to the attack on the World Trade Center at the turn of the century.

The September 11 attack, or 9/11 as it is known in the United States, killed nearly 3,000 people and cost over $10 billion in damages. It was also the first attack by a foreign agent on U.S. soil since Pearl Harbor. Furthermore, it established Al Qaeda as a capable terrorist organization, enabling it to expand both its brand and its network. Today, Al Qaeda is one of the most important Islamist groups in the world, with 40 national branches in countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.[1] It continues to target U.S. interests in each country, although it also maintains the objective of overthrowing the host government and instating fundamental Islamic regimes that will oversee the implementation of sharia law.

George W. Bush instigated the "Global War on Terror" (GWoT) in 2001 as a response to the perceived threat of further terrorist attacks against U.S. interests. Although the term has since been dismissed by his successor President Barack Obama, the ideas behind the GWoT continue to direct U.S. foreign policy and that of its allies. In practice, the Bush administration's war on terror included defeating Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda and identifying and destroying like-minded organizations in the United States and abroad:

> The United States' strategy for combating terrorism focuses on taking the fight to the terrorists themselves. We are using all elements of our national power and international influence to attack terror networks; reduce their ability to communicate and coordinate their plans; isolate them from potential allies and from each other; and identify and disrupt their plots before they attack.
>
> Our country works closely with every nation committed to this fight, and we will continue to help our allies and friends improve their ability to fight terror.[2]

This has led to military operations and assistance around the world, and several governments, including Nigeria, have aligned themselves with the U.S. strategy to receive funds and weapons to defeat domestic challengers to their authority. In spite of the global antiterror campaign, however, there has been no universal definition of "terrorism," although there are similarities in the descriptions adopted by each country. The U.S. Department of State defined "terrorism" in Title 22 of the U.S. Code, Section 2656f(d), published in 1983, as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."

Conversely, or perhaps confusingly, expert David Kilcullen describes an insurgency as "a popular movement that seeks to overthrow the status quo through subversion, political activity, insurrection, armed conflict and terrorism."[3] In general, discourses on the whos and whats of terrorism and insurgencies remain the monopoly of the state and in particular the West; as a consequence they substantially influence the academic and political approach to this matter. It can be agreed that terrorists and insurgents are nonstate actors that employ violence as a means to achieve political goals. In other words, it is "the continuation of politics by other means."[4] In addition, the violence is specifically intended to have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victims, thereby targeting the public at large by exploiting media attention. The same acts of violence

with the intent to terrorize and subdue the population when employed by the state are not, by modern definitions, considered to be terrorism.

The GWoT has been widely criticized for creating an overarching category that did not separate criminals, insurgents, and terrorists. John A. Nagl, expert in counterinsurgency who helped write the *U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, denounced the term as "enormously unfortunate because I think it pulled together disparate organizations and insurgencies."[5] The Obama administration changed the name of GWoT in 2009 to "overseas contingency operations," reframing the campaign from a global war with purely military solutions to an all-encompassing strategy, focusing on political violence in select countries.

REBELS, INSURGENTS, AND TERRORISTS

Boko Haram has been called a terrorist group, an insurgency, and a rebel group. The categories are not always interchangeable, even if used as such. Boko Haram is first and foremost a cult that grew into an Islamist insurgency with the help of its key allies, and has recently been designated as a terrorist group by a number of countries and the United Nations. Insurgents and terrorists often share a common goal of bringing about political change. The difference between the two is arguably the scale of the group and the organization and scope of the violence.[6] Who they target is also of importance: while insurgents mainly attack the state and its representatives such as the police and the armed forces in the immediate vicinity of their operational base, terrorists tend to include foreign and especially Western interests as their top targets. Until 2013, nearly 90 percent of Boko Haram's attacks targeted police stations—a much softer target than army formations—and the armed forces in northeast Nigeria,[7] and other than the 2011 bombing of the UN headquarters in Abuja, it has not directly threatened foreign interests in the country.

Insurgents are supported by and are able to mobilize a significant portion of the local population, making them first and foremost a domestic actor. The denomination "terrorist" reduces the legitimacy as a nonstate actor, whereas insurgents have more credibility as opponents of the state. The size and support base of the group are crucial for terrorism, says expert Bruce Hoffman, who explains that insurgents refer to a "numerically larger group

of armed individuals" than are present in terrorist groups.[8] The U.S. State Department estimates that Boko Haram counts at the most a few thousand members today, although an Amnesty International report has put the number at 15,000.[9] Regardless, this represents a relatively small proportion compared to the population in the northeast. In effect, "the terrorist is almost always in a minority […], they rarely have majority support, let alone some alternative blueprint as to how their vision of a better world will work."[10] Terrorists rarely bring about change, although they can cause a lot of damage in their attempt to do so.

Furthermore, insurgents generally aim to exercise some form of sovereign territorial control over a specific geographic space and its population. They, therefore, struggle with the state in a contest over land and hearts.[11] Bell and Evans define "insurgents" as "overtly nationalist, spatially contained and classically defensive […] designed to liberate a homeland" from a tyrant or an unacceptable way of life.[12] Boko Haram's presence in the northeast and its occupation of substantial territory—the size of Belgium or Maryland by some estimates—suggest a pattern closer to an insurgency than to a terrorist group. Terrorists are transnational by nature. Their objectives transcend the nation-state, and they can carry out operations thousands of kilometers away from their base. In the case of Islamist groups, the dream of a return to an Islamic caliphate does pertain to territory, and they do offer a political revolution that involves reinstating sharia law. Beyond that, however, there is a limited program of actual political reform, although one might say the same for some insurgent groups that just seek to replace the regime in power with their own cronies, as has often been the case in African states. As such, Islamist groups create a conundrum that does not easily distinguish them from existing definitions of insurgents or terrorists for that matter.

These distinctions are often marginal in any case. Insurgent groups may behave like terrorists, using kidnapping and suicide bombings to gain political traction while developing social benefit programs for the people they command. This was the case of Hezbollah, which employed both terrorist and guerilla tactics against Israel while providing social welfare to the communities under its protection. Likewise, Boko Haram ensures that its combatants receive wives, an important service in a culture where poverty is both rampant and humiliating as young men are not able to

support a family. The Islamic State/ISIS makes a lot of effort to portray itself as helping to rebuild the community in territories it has occupied in Syria and Iraq.[13] The Islamic State/ISIS's grand strategy involves conquest and control, much like any insurgency. Its rejection of existing borders decided by the Sykes-Picot Agreement appears to be anticolonial and defensible, rather than purely abstract or ideological, even if it does erase an established convention a hundred years in the making.

Terrorists have been portrayed in Western media as "nihilistic" or "apocalyptic"[14] and are therefore stripped of any kind of political legitimacy. This is too simplistic however. Notwithstanding the use of suicide bombers, every paramilitary movement requires a certain amount of sacrifice. Suicide bombers are unarguably a cost-effective, low-risk strategy that spurs terror among the population. But while some individuals have volunteered for this mission, others have been forced into it, as is increasingly the case in suicide bombings carried out by women and children for Boko Haram. This method does not in any way erode the deeply political and religious long-term objectives of the group and does not reflect a nihilistic ideology from the leadership. Furthermore, few organizations in history have been simply destructive, and while Al Qaeda may have started out this way with bin Laden, its local branches have grown on the seeds of social discontent within a population that maintains hope in a better future.

Insurgent groups often emerge as the result of endemic socioeconomic and political problems inside a state. The real or perceived corruption and incompetence of the government leads nonstate actors to take matters into their own hands. Where there is no viable political alternative, they may resort to violence to overthrow or push the unpopular government out of a designated territory. This requires the cooperation of the local population or, at the very least, the noncollaboration of the people with the state's security apparatus. Security forces in northeastern Nigeria have indeed found few informers to help them hunt down members of Boko Haram—although their own reputation for brutality and the possibility of retribution by the insurgents are likely deterrents to the population (Table 6.1).[15]

Table 6.1
Characteristics of terrorists and insurgents

	Terrorists	Insurgents
Numbers	A minority	Representative of population
Ideology	Nihilistic	Based on existing grievances
Methods	Violent, destructive	Violent, destructive
Targets	Anyone, including foreigners in the country and abroad	The state and its symbols, generally close to the home base
Objectives	Transnational	Pushing the government out of insurgents' territory
Legitimacy	None	Local and international recognition
Response	Hunt and eliminate	Address grievances, deter the use of violence

The designation of "terrorist organization" therefore has been as political as it is problematic for any attempt to categorize and define violent nonstate actors. The Tamil Tigers, Hamas, and Hezbollah have all received the tag "terrorist" by their respective states and corresponding allies. But they have also gained local and international credibility by mobilizing a significant portion of the population and clearly establishing their political goals in opposition to often corrupt and inefficient governments. They have proven their ability to control territory and offer protection and support to the inhabitants, thereby further eroding the legitimacy of the state. One may argue that the real difference between a terrorist and an insurgent, where the actor appears to bridge both categories, is in the outcome and level of success over time. If terrorists are defined as agents of wanton destruction with no real or realistic political agenda, then their failure in the long term is unavoidable.

A successful counterinsurgency strategy therefore needs to take into account the population and reintegrate them into the state through tangible and lasting social and political reforms. The problem with the GWoT designed by the Bush administration is that it focused on hunting down an enemy with the objective of eliminating it, leaving no space for negotiations or alternative solutions. This strategy requires a great deal of brute force, which further alienates the victimized population vis-à-vis the state or the foreigners who are carrying out the policy through violent means. Obama's "overseas contingency operations" goes a way toward reshaping the strategy, albeit with little tangible impact for Nigeria as the government continues to address Boko Haram with a "hunt and destroy" mentality.

ISLAMIST INSURGENCIES AND THE CALIPHATE

Islamist insurgencies appear to have spread significantly since the beginning of the 21st century. Many of these insurgencies predate the arrival of bin Laden on the international theater. Nonetheless, there is a significant territorial overlap between the location of these long-lasting insurgencies and Al Qaeda's local branches. Author David Kilcullen finds "a correlation between the geographical area of the historical Caliphate, the broader pan-Islamic Caliphate sought by Al Qaeda (which never fully existed in a historical sense) and Islamist insurgency."[16] As mentioned previously, the caliphate at its peak included 15 million square kilometers and extended across Asia and the Middle East, and into North and West Africa.[17] There appears to be a clear divide between the areas undergoing some kind of Islamist uprising or insurgency and countries with no history of a Muslim ruler. This suggests a common goal shared by Islamist insurgencies and terrorist groups to undermine the existing Judeo-Christian domination of the world order and reestablish a 21st-century caliphate through a concerted strategy of "subversion, terrorism and insurgency."[18]

Boko Haram appears to have found common ground with existing terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, and the Islamic State/ISIS, renaming itself the Islamic State of West Africa in April 2015. Although each group has different interpretations of the Islamic faith, they all share a dream of implementing sharia law within their territories. A common history with exposure to Muslim rule has taught the populations notions of Arabic and a sort of shared Islamic culture that bridges the ethnic differences between the combatants. Joint training programs in Mali, Somalia, and Afghanistan have enabled leaders and combatants to build a common narrative and develop their networks. In addition, many terrorist leaders seem to have undergone religious training at some point of their careers, often in Saudi Arabia under Wahhabi clerics.

According to Kilcullen, we are dealing with a global jihadist/Islamist movement that operates through multiple theaters with a shared overarching ideology and common tactics. It is important to note that this is not a single monolithic organization but a loose network of like-minded groups with entirely separate hierarchies. The political nature of the network, its grassroots origins, and its use of violence and subversion are what distinguish it as an insurgency. Although each group works locally, the

Islamist insurgency as a whole distinguishes itself from previous insurgencies by its transnational ambition: it seeks to transform the entire Islamic world and return it to a golden age of power and culture by recreating the caliphate. The grievances of the insurgents are not new; neither is the feeling of disempowerment in an apostate Western world that Al Qaeda and similar groups have integrated into their broader ideology. The methods they employ, terrorism, subversion, and guerrilla warfare, have been tried and tested throughout history. The revolution for a 21st-century audience is in the scale of this ambition that has been dreamed up by these nonstate actors who seek to undermine an established order with a well-known set of rules and rigid borders.

AFRICA AND THE WAR ON TERROR

From the very start, the campaign identified the African continent as a major strategic front in the GWoT. With a significant number of Muslims, a history of religious radicalism (whether Muslim or Christian), and a poor track record of governance, countries such as Sudan, Nigeria, Algeria, and Morocco appeared quickly on the list of countries at risk: the 9/11 Commission Report published in 2004 identified West Africa and especially Nigeria and Mali as likely to foster Islamist terrorist groups.[19] Prior to this, Osama bin Laden himself listed both Nigeria and Morocco among countries to be liberated by jihad.[20] Top U.S. officials sweepingly described the Sahara as a "swamp of terror," a "terrorist infestation" that needed to be "drained," and a "magnet for terrorists."[21]

Although author Jeremy Keenan concludes that the United States fabricated a "fiction of terrorism" in Africa to justify its military policies, there is sufficient precedence and evidence to demonstrate an actual threat on the continent. In 1998, Al Qaeda claimed responsibility for blowing up the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. The bombing of the U.S. ship USS *Cole* in 2000 in Aden, Yemen, was linked to Sudan, which was previously harboring bin Laden. Attacks in Spain and in France have also been traced back to terrorist cells in Algeria and Morocco, which have themselves been victims of terrorist attacks.

The GWoT has prioritized internationally minded terrorists, and therefore logically pursues Al Qaeda and similar organizations. The main problem in

Africa is the presence of violent nonstate actors who espouse a radical ideology but generally have no international aspirations. The great expanse of ungovernable space along with the extreme religiosity and greed of some individuals has led to the rise of insurgencies, such as the Lord's Resistance Army that has caused havoc in northern Uganda, the various militias operating in East Congo, and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta in Nigeria. The continent's history of violent uprisings has therefore shaped the world's response to the phenomenon that is Boko Haram.

AL-SHABAAB: SOMALIA'S ISLAMIST INSURGENCY

Islamist activities in the horn of Africa and in North Africa have influenced the way Boko Haram is perceived by the West. The United States and its allies have expressed fears that ungoverned areas such as Somalia would become a hub for terrorists who could then operate across Africa and into the Middle East. Although these fears have so far proven unfounded, there are ongoing concerns that the growing alliances between Islamist insurgents in Africa and Al Qaeda–type organizations will work as a force multiplier and expand the power and influence of terrorist groups.

In Somalia, an Islamist movement known as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) took control of the capital Mogadishu in 2006 with its armed wing, Al-Shabaab (which means "the Youth"). The ICU brought a short period of peace, imposing sharia law and order in the city following over a decade of civil unrest sparked by the ousting of President Siad Barre in 1991. The ICU was quickly disbanded as neighboring Ethiopia intervened militarily at the request of Somalia's Western-backed Transitional Federal Government (TFG). The TFG was set up in 2004 but did not enjoy much legitimacy domestically and was fraught with internal divisions and competition between the ruling clans.[22] The perceived foreign invasion had a radicalizing effect on Al-Shabaab members, who began a bloody guerilla campaign. Ethiopia eventually pulled out in 2009 and was replaced by a few thousand African troops under the aegis of the African Union (AU). The peacekeepers have mostly remained in and around Mogadishu, whereas Al-Shabaab, bolstered by public support for its cause, maintained control over large swathes of Somalia, including for a while the port of Kismayo. The militants' use of improvised explosive devices and suicide bombings is

reminiscent of Al Qaeda, even though the Somali group has until recently anchored its objectives firmly inside the country. Al-Shabaab had portrayed itself first and foremost as a nationalist Islamist resistance movement whose primary objective is to drive out the foreigners. This changed in 2010 when the militants declared their affiliation with Al Qaeda.

The new alliance changed the playing field and the way both Al-Shabaab and later Boko Haram would be portrayed in the West. From being relatively inward-looking, Al-Shabaab began to carry out attacks in neighboring Kenya and threatening foreigners by calling for attacks against Western shopping malls. It is apparent that Al-Shabaab has developed strategically since its encounters with Al Qaeda, gaining access to more sophisticated weaponry and increasing the level of violence of its attacks. The group has specifically targeted hotels and restaurants in Mogadishu, as well as both foreign and local political figures. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack on the 2013 Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi that killed 63 people and injured a further 175, and its assault on a university in Garissa, in the North Eastern Province of Kenya, left 148 students dead. Al-Shabaab has further continued to launch attacks in Kenya, especially along the common border, killing 173 people in 2014 alone. According to the statements released by Al-Shabaab, the militants have been at war with Kenya since 2011, when the country sent troops to Somalia to fight the insurgents.[23] They justified the attack on Westgate as "revenge for the Kenyan government's brutal oppression of Muslims in Kenya through coercion, intimidation and extrajudicial killings of Muslim scholars."[24] Although this language and the targeting of foreigners are reminiscent of a transnational Islamist ideology, Al-Shabaab has consistently accused Kenya of "continued invasion and occupation of our Muslim lands and the massacre of innocent Muslims in Somalia,"[25] indicating that the grievance remains locally rooted.

The enormous Somali diaspora, particularly in the United States and in Europe, has been a source of concern as it presents an opportunity for radicalization and recruitment. By one estimate, Al-Shabaab has recruited over 1,000 members from the diaspora over the past few years.[26] Al-Shabaab has also recruited a handful of U.S. citizens in Minnesota who have joined ranks with the militants in Somalia, although to this date none have returned home to threaten U.S. territory. The increasingly violent

methods employed by Al-Shabaab appear to have been counterproductive, however, as the militants have since lost much popular support. In addition, reports of a division among the leadership reflect the group's identity crisis. Some leaders have expressed their desire to keep the focus on Somalia, while others are clamoring to carry out more attacks abroad. The establishment and success of the Islamic State/ISIS appears to have been a significant factor in the leadership's divorce, with some contemplating leaving the Al Qaeda partnership and joining ISIS.[27] Either way, Al-Shabaab has already made the move from Islamist insurgency to being an active participant in the global jihad.

Al-Shabaab's flirtation with Al Qaeda and its attacks in neighboring countries changed the nature of the insurgency into that of a terrorist group. While the Somali militants do not present an immediate threat to the West, their destabilization potential in a strategically important part of Africa has mobilized an international response via proxies such as the AU. Kenya and Ethiopia are justifiably worried about this surge in Islamist terrorism with Al-Shabaab threatening and launching attacks across the border. While the emergence of Al-Shabaab is undoubtedly rooted in local grievances, its alliance with Al Qaeda and its rapprochement with the Islamic State/ISIS have raised serious security concerns. Regardless of Al-Shabaab's relatively localized track record, it has a real recruitment potential from the Somali diaspora and the demonstrable capability and intent to launch both sophisticated attacks and suicide missions against foreigners. Finally, its affiliation with known terrorist groups increases the legitimacy of the latter and further frames the situation as a clash of civilizations between the Christian West and the Muslim world.

TERRORISTS IN NORTH AFRICA

North Africa and the Sahel region have long experienced the threat of Islamist insurgents who have recently benefited from and been reinforced by international terrorist networks such as Al Qaeda. Since 1996, Algeria has suffered terrorist attacks from the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) that sought to establish an Islamic state in the country. The GSPC is an offshoot of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), which fought a violent insurgency against the secular Algerian state in the 1990s. Neither

group had transnational aspirations until 2008, when the GSPC merged into AQIM.

AQIM has continued to target Algeria, carrying out suicide missions and hijackings, taking hostages, and attacking security personnel and even foreign workers. It has also expanded its reach, increasing its activities in the Sahel and sending combatants to Iraq and Afghanistan to help the Islamist insurgency. According to a 2013 Rand report, under the leadership of Abdelmalek Droukdal, AQIM's ambitions became regional rather than just local, reflecting the leader's desire to create an Islamist caliphate beyond Algeria's borders. Although this appears in line with Al Qaeda's goals, Chivvis and Liepman describe the alliance as a "marriage of convenience" between leaders who share a common jihadist and anti-Western ideology that justifies the use of force.[28] For AQIM, however, the foreign enemy is France rather than the United States, and while the Al Qaeda brand gives the group legitimacy, both organizations operate with entirely separate chains of command.

Unlike Al Qaeda, Droukdal's organization has not particularly targeted Western interests in the region or abroad. Indeed, bin Laden's obsession with pursuing the United States does not appear to have inspired any of its local partners. AQIM has maintained its focus on building a North African caliphate, grabbing the opportunity to install itself in northern Mali when the regime collapsed in 2012. AQIM emerged in an environment with gross levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality, all within an expanse of land with very limited government presence. This created an opportunity for criminal and insurgent activities, which go hand in hand in the Sahel. Indeed, AQIM has built a fortune from kidnap and ransom and smuggling operations led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar who commanded the southern faction of the GSPC. Droukdal and the senior *Shura* (leadership council) expelled Belmokhtar in 2012 though, accusing him of disobeying orders, pursuing his own agenda in Mali, and failing to share his loot.[29] Belmokhtar's objectives appear to have been more financial than political, and even his notorious attack on the In Amenas gas facility smacked of greed when the attackers tried to leave the premises with hostages presumably to ransom them off. On the other hand, Belmokhtar claimed responsibility for the May 2013 suicide attacks on a military camp and French-run uranium mine in Niger that killed 25 people and had little

financial benefit—unless he received payment from Al Qaeda. He justified this attack as revenge for France's "war against Sharia."[30]

AQIM's big moment came in 2012 when it successfully established control over northern Mali. It effectively hijacked the Tuareg insurgency after the separatist group known as the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) declared the independence of Azawad in northern Mali. The Tuaregs had fought to have their own state since 1960, and took advantage of a military coup against President Touré and the ensuing political chaos in March 2012 to capture Timbuktu and claim it as their capital. To achieve this feat, the MNLA allied itself with the local Islamist group Ansar Dine, also primarily made up of Tuaregs, albeit whose goal is the implementation of sharia law throughout Mali. The Tuareg rebellion was initially successful, but quickly turned sour as Islamist groups, Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Belmokhtar's AQIM, stepped into the power vacuum.

MUJAO is also a Mali-based Tuareg Islamist organization that was previously associated with AQIM but broke off in 2011, allegedly over the marginalization of black African members. MUJAO claimed to spread Islamist law in black Africa.[31] In this complicated interplay of Islamist and secular groups in the 2012 Mali rebellion, it is important take note of the many interests and ideologies that compete with one another. While the MNLA insurgency was inward looking and seeking to create an independent secular Tuareg state, Ansar Dine sought to implement sharia law in that state, and turned to MUJAO and AQIM for support. The latter grabbed this opportunity to overwhelm the MNLA and push it out of the new Azawad state; AQIM subsequently imposed sharia law and created the first Islamic state of the 21st century.

By December 2012, AQIM and its allies had firm control over northern Mali and began to develop their model of statehood. They opened training camps for like-minded terrorists and threatened to become the "Tora Bora of Africa,"[32] attracting jihadists from around the world and providing them with a safe haven. In early 2013, the insurgents began to move south toward Bamako, the capital of Mali, demonstrating their intention to expand their territory. The unexpected success of an Al Qaeda–affiliated insurgency and their occupation of territory less than 2,500 km from Spain presented a real and immediate threat to the security of Europe. Indeed, in January 2013, a terrorist hub had clearly appeared on Europe's doorstep, forcing France to

intervene to protect itself from a group that clearly held grievances against the former empire.

THE JIHADI THREAT AND FRENCH INTERVENTION

Despite the perceived terrorist threat of an Islamist state in Mali, it took 10 months for the international community to put together a coherent military response. Originally, French president François Hollande had stated that France would not shoulder the responsibility and expense of intervening in Mali and instead lobbied for the creation of a 3,000-strong Economic Community of West African States mission.[33] France was forced to intervene nonetheless when faced with the real prospect of an Islamist regime in Bamako apparently ready to sponsor terrorist attacks in Europe. Responding to the invitation by Mali's recognized government, France sent 4,000 soldiers supported by air force to the African country under Operation Serval.

France justified its intervention to the domestic audience by stressing the real and immediate threat of "a terrorist state created near Europe or France."[34] Reports of a terrorist hub proved unfounded, however. Some foreign fighters were found among the ranks of the insurgents, but overall the numbers were relatively small, with most jihadists originally from the region. Furthermore, the foreign intervention did not defeat AQIM whose members simply dispersed in the desert and reprised their criminal activities. Whether AQIM ever presented a real threat to Europe is also arguable. Droukdal's position was outlined in a letter found in Timbuktu in which he expressed his concerns over the population's support and feared French intervention.[35] AQIM has carried out very few attacks against the West and Western interests in Africa or abroad—despite threatening France regularly and praising the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks. While this may be the result of the fragmented leadership, it also reflects the organization's priority, which is the implementation of sharia law in North Africa.

Nonetheless, the growing influence and capability of like-minded jihadists in North Africa does present a threat both to the region and to Europe. AQIM and Al Qaeda act as a force multiplier, recruiting and radicalizing members from across the Maghreb, sharing strategies and ideologies, and facilitating the trafficking of weapons that can eventually be

used in attacks at home or abroad. They also provide a frame of legitimacy for individuals with personal grudges against the state and against foreigners. Finally, the presence and success of Islamist groups *anywhere* in the world sends a dangerous signal to others and helps propagate the ideology. The weak security infrastructure in much of North Africa enables the propagation, movement, and criminal activities of Islamists throughout the region, further endangering countries such as Libya and Tunisia, which are even closer to Europe.

THE NEW THREAT: ISLAMIC STATE/ISIS

To add to an already crowded playground of Islamist insurgent groups in North Africa, the Islamic State/ISIS has spread from Syria and Iraq to Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia, and has ambitions to further expand its footprint across the continent. The Islamic State/ISIS was born out of the ashes of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) but unlike its predecessor, it aims to create an Islamic state in the Middle East and across Africa instead of focusing on targeting U.S. and Western interests. The Islamist organization has declared its intention of recreating the caliphate and implementing strict sharia law in its territory. Taking advantage of the civil war in Syria and in Iraq, the group has fomented strategic alliances in the region and developed a sophisticated campaign to attract Muslim recruits and funding from around the world.

In the last year, the Islamic State/ISIS has successfully created an image of a promised land for Muslims. The allure of a strong independent state promoting Islamic law and challenging the patronizing supremacy of the West has appealed to a number of disenchanted youths from around the world but especially from North Africa and the Middle East where hopes of the Arab Spring have quickly faded. Four years after the popular uprisings, Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya have seen no socioeconomic progress. Unemployment rates have increased, as have poverty and inequality. A report from HSBC Bank published in 2013 predicted a decrease of 35 percent in the output of countries that underwent severe political unrest in the "Arab Spring." In Libya, public revenue fell by as much as 84 percent, while unemployment in Egypt has risen by at least three percentage points; indicators of good governance and the rule of law have both diminished in the affected countries.[36] There are fewer political freedoms and instead

there is more insecurity, leaving those who participated in the Arab Spring disillusioned with the entire system.

The countries that underwent a change of government in the aftermath of the Arab Spring have all seen a spectacular rise in terrorist attacks and armed groups. Radical Islamist groups have been particularly successful in Libya and Egypt. Tunisia is considered to be the single largest supplier of ISIS fighters to Syria. In 2015 the group even released an issue of its magazine *Dabiq*, dedicated to its expansion across Africa.[37] Local Islamist groups in the Sinai Peninsula and in eastern Libya have pledged their allegiance to the Islamic State/ISIS and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Many of these groups have integrated fighters who joined ISIS in the Middle East and have since returned to their country to resume the war under the uniting flag of the Islamist organization.

Libya in particular presents an attractive target to the Islamic State/ISIS. It has huge oil reserves that have already been an important source of revenue to the group in Iraq. Libya still has giant stockpiles of weapons from the Gadhafi regime and the 2011 civil war that saw arms transfers to the rebels by the United States and its Western allies. The country today is awash with weapons, which is one of the reasons that so many rebel groups have risen and continue to fight each other, thereby undermining any attempts at a stable government. Furthermore, Libya is a gateway into Europe—just 800 km from the Italian coast—facilitating the groups' expansion northward and enabling prospective members to travel to the bases in Africa and the Middle East. In less than a year, ISIS has confirmed it has branches in Derna, Benghazi, Sirte, and Tripoli and has successfully carried out attacks against the state and foreign symbols such as the Hotel Corinthia in Tripoli. It has also strengthened recruitment efforts in Algeria and in Morocco, targeting as usual the youth.

The Islamic State/ISIS has extended its operational reach far beyond the territory it controls. The group presents a proven threat to the West and Western interests in North Africa, the Middle East, and increasingly also in Europe. In addition to the humanitarian crisis that the Islamist group's advance has provoked on the European continent, the director of Europol Rob Wainwright confirmed that ISIS has "been making threats about targeting the West for some time."[38] The Islamic State/ISIS has also been cultivating terrorist cells in Europe by radicalizing young Muslims via online networks such as Twitter. At least 5,000 EU citizens were suspected

of ISIS-linked activities by mid-2015.[39] Some have already carried out attacks such as the shooting at a Jewish Museum in Brussels by a French returnee who killed four people. Additional plots have also been uncovered by the police in select European countries.

Furthermore, the Islamic State/ISIS has made a point of torturing and targeting Christians in the territories they occupy. This overt attack on Western values has outraged many Europeans. The execution of 21 Egyptian Copts in February 2015 was done with the express objective of sending a signal to the West that has historically come to the defense of Christians in various parts of the world. This message was compounded by another Dabiq issue in fall 2015, where ISIS offered a Norwegian and Chinese prisoner for sale with headings accusing the West of abandoning its own citizens. ISIS's strategy has anchored the fight into a religious struggle for domination between the Christian hegemon and the Muslim challenger. As the underdog, the aspiring Muslims are forced to resort to guerilla and terrorist tactics and take advantage of weakened state infrastructures, a strategy that has so far rewarded them well.

The Islamic State/ISIS and Al Qaeda are profoundly different in the way they operate and in the threat they present to the West. While they each seek to represent the global community of Muslims, the Islamic State/ISIS has focused on building an army and waging a military campaign in Iraq and Syria, thereby adopting characteristics of a state. The Islamic State/ISIS subsequently declared the establishment of a caliphate, receiving a divided response from Islamist terrorist groups worldwide. The continued territorial expansion of al-Baghdadi's group has since built up its legitimacy and forced a competition of sorts with Al Qaeda, which continues to present the United States as the prime enemy to be defeated. ISIS has instead focused on the overthrow of "apostate" regimes such as Syria and Saudi Arabia and purifying the Muslim community by attacking factions considered out of religion, such as the Shi'a and other minority groups. While both groups aspire to the creation of an Islamic caliphate, ISIS has gone ahead and made this a reality, leaving Al Qaeda to broadcast an ideology without making any tangible territorial gains. As a result, a number of splinter groups have left Al Qaeda and sworn allegiance to the Islamic State/ISIS. Others, such as Al-Shabaab, are contemplating a move, while Boko Haram has already proclaimed its support for both groups—although Abu Shekau seems to be

building his own caliphate and is unlikely to place himself under the hierarchy of ISIS.

JIHADI NETWORKING

In the 21st century, all terrorist groups are transnational to a degree. The Internet and in particular social media such as Facebook and Twitter have enabled local groups to learn from more sophisticated ones and to reach out to them for advice and financial support. It is the relatively smaller groups with limited local or regional goals who carry out most terrorist attacks worldwide. The umbrella brand offered by Al Qaeda or the Islamic State/ISIS enables these small groups to claim universal goals and legitimize their activities by placing them within a wider context.

A group like Boko Haram is made up principally of uneducated individuals with little if any military experience other than the guerilla tactics that they have learned on the job and, sometimes, participation in terrorist training camps abroad. As a result, their strategy has been relatively rudimentary, focusing on hit-and-run strikes on poorly guarded facilities and towns with a weak security presence. Even the introduction of heavy weaponry has barely affected their strike capacity as the victims continue to be "soft" targets in most cases.

On the other hand, Boko Haram has made good use of social media to advertise its victories and spread fear among the Nigerian population. It is also learning from its Syrian counterparts: in January 2015, Boko Haram set up an official Twitter account in Arabic: @Urwatu_Wutqa. Although the tech company shut down the account after only 19 tweets, other accounts have since emerged on Twitter and in other forums such as sendvid and Justpast.it. The online propaganda campaign is used by Boko Haram to advertise military victories and post pictures of militants, illustrating its success against the Nigerian state and its security forces. Furthermore, Boko Haram has begun to upload videos onto YouTube instead of using carriers to pass them on to news outlets, as was previously the case. Facebook has also recently removed material associated with Boko Haram, according to Nigerian newspaper *Premium Times*.[40]

The quality of Boko Haram's media releases has increased substantially, moving away from the grainy productions featuring Abu Shekau's endless speeches in Hausa. Recent videos include "professionally designed graphics

and high quality opening sequences."[41] They also increasingly include subtitles in English, French, and Arabic, suggesting that the group is probably receiving assistance from one of its affiliates, possibly ISIS members who have already demonstrated their prowess with social media. Indeed, recent videos of beheadings by Boko Haram bear the mark of an ISIS production. Media cooperation between the different groups would be to their mutual advantage. Nonetheless, continued inconsistencies and spelling mistakes in Boko Haram's media releases suggest that full integration between the two groups has not materialized. Communication between them is probably risky and unreliable, diminishing the opportunity to instruct and assist Boko Haram on its propaganda campaign.

PORTRAYING BOKO HARAM AS INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

Former president Goodluck Jonathan has long sought to portray Boko Haram as more than a Nigerian problem. In a bid to gain foreign military assistance and especially equipment, he has framed the Nigerian insurgency as "international terrorism."[42] At the Regional Summit on Security in Nigeria, held in Paris in May 2014, Jonathan provided a carefully constructed narrative of the crisis, calling the Boko Haram insurgency the "new frontier of the global war on terror."[43] In a dramatic speech, he explained that the group's goal was to take over Nigeria and turn it into a terrorist base that would attack all of Western Africa and eventually the entire African continent. Boko Haram, according to Jonathan, was "an integral part of the Al Qaeda network," a carefully crafted reference to the number one enemy of the United States.

Following the kidnapping of nearly 300 girls in May–April, Goodluck Jonathan finally appealed to the United Nations to add the Islamist group to the UN Security Council sanctions list. This involved placing restrictions on Boko Haram with the objective of "drying up support" for the group, in particular funding and arms, and imposing a travel ban on its members.[44] Jonathan pointed to Boko Haram's dealings with AQIM to substantiate claims that this was indeed an international terrorist group whose recent success was linked to "extremist foreign elements."[45] Weapons retrieved by the Nigerian armed forces were characterized as "alien" and were evidently

imported from neighboring states. The Al Qaeda sanctions committee justified its inclusion of Boko Haram on the list by stressing its association with Al Qaeda and "participating in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing, or perpetrating of acts or activities by, in conjunction with, under the name of, on behalf of, or in support of Al-Qaida (QE.A.4.01) and the Organization of Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (QE.T.14.01)."[46]

Prior to the kidnapping, Jonathan's government had been reluctant to appeal to the international community and instead firmly portrayed Boko Haram as a local insurgency that the security forces were capable of handling. The change of strategy in 2014 is likely a logical reaction to the unexpected expansion of the insurgency in the northeast of the country, their increasingly aggressive and cruel tactics targeted at civilians, and the ensuing uproar from the international community. While Jonathan's rhetoric is powerful and angled to garner international support, his claims are largely unsubstantiated, however, as Boko Haram remains a local and arguably regional threat with limited ties to international terrorist groups.

This does not reduce the influence that Islamist networks have on one another as force-multipliers. The inability of the Nigerian security forces to curtail the rise of Boko Haram enables the group to further establish itself inside the country and take advantage of the assistance and legitimacy offered by bigger like-minded organizations such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State/ISIS. The West's reluctance to actively assist the Nigerian Army does indeed allow for the situation to get worse in what has become a race for time. Recently elected President Muhammadu Buhari commented on the adverse effect of the West's inadequate support in July 2015, which inadvertently enables Boko Haram's ability to carry out further attacks in Nigeria and potentially expand abroad.

THE GLOBAL JIHADIST THREAT

In the years since September 2001, new Islamist terrorist groups appear to have thrived around the world and in particular in Africa. Between AQIM, Al-Shabaab, ISIS, and Boko Haram, the African continent really does look like an opportune environment for ambitious Islamist groups. Reports from the Institute for Economics and Peace and the U.S. Department of State concur that the number of attacks worldwide has been increasing over the past few years.[47] In Africa, however, only one country

makes it to the top five terrorist "hot spots": Nigeria—although Libya is also cited as "an enabling environment for the emergence of extremist radicalism and violence"[48] due to the presence of Islamist groups and the failed governance across the country. The tactics employed by Islamist groups in Africa and the Middle East are increasingly brutal, a trend that is spearheaded by ISIS and mimicked by Boko Haram that "shared with (ISIS) a penchant for the use of brutal tactics, which included stoning, indiscriminate mass casualty attacks, and kidnapping children for enslavement."[49]

The number of terrorist attacks worldwide increased by 35 percent in 2014 over the previous year, with 81 percent more fatalities.[50] A majority of attacks were orchestrated by Boko Haram, Al Qaeda, and ISIS. The presence and increasing capability of ISIS in Africa suggest that this number will probably go up in North Africa. Globally, the threat of Islamist attacks to the West remains statistically insignificant, however: over the last 14 years, just 5 percent, about 5,350, terrorist fatalities have taken place in countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, primarily in Turkey and Israel. Most attacks in the Europe, the United States, and Canada were conducted by "lone wolves" inspired and often armed by the jihadi network. The war in Syria is singled out by the State Department in the 2014 terrorism report as the primary driver of worldwide terrorism, attracting fighters from around the world. And both ISIS and Al Qaeda continue to inspire the global network of Islamist-affiliated groups, although Al Qaeda appears to have lost momentum since the creation of the Islamic State/ISIS.

Africa therefore is central to the global jihadist threat. Internationally sponsored groups have struck against U.S. targets in Tanzania and Kenya, among others. They have created terrorist groups and sleeper cells across North Africa that recruit foreigners and provide a safe haven for would-be terrorists. Training camps have operated in countries where governance does not extend beyond the major cities, teaching militants how to carry out attacks. Countries such as Algeria and Somalia have a long history of radical Islamist groups opposing the state, whereas sub-Saharan Africa has so far escaped most of the trouble, with the exception of Nigeria. Somalia's ties with the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa's close access to Europe inevitably offer opportunities for terrorists to cross over from their bases and expand or target neighboring regions. In addition, these networks can

be used to develop lucrative criminal activities such as weapons, drugs, and people trafficking.

It would be a mistake to over-obsess about the Boko Haram connection to groups such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State/ISIS. The group emerged endogenously and does not come under the hierarchy of any foreign-based organization. Despite its claims for an Islamic caliphate in West Africa, there can be no doubt that Abu Shekau and his deputies will want to keep their power concentrated in their hands inside Nigeria and are unlikely to deploy resources for transnational missions. Boko Haram has risen from domestic grievances and is unlikely to have any of its demands met by the Nigerian government. This is most convenient of course, because then they would lose their raison d'être.

Boko Haram is analyzed within this context of global Islamist terrorism. Even though the Nigerian group resembles an insurgency more than a terrorist group such as Al Qaeda, its ideological affiliation and its development potential through its alliances make it a source of concern, if not a direct threat to the West. So far Boko Haram has focused on northeast Nigeria and its immediate vicinity. It has not particularly targeted foreigners, and it certainly hasn't carried out any operations in Europe or the United States, unlike other Al Qaeda affiliates. Nonetheless, the group has developed its strategy and strike capacity, getting inspiration from like-minded organizations such as ISIS and AQIM. Finally, Boko Haram is guilty by association: by aligning itself with international terrorist groups that have directly threatened the West, it lends credibility to the Islamist insurgency, which in itself is threatening to Western security and interests.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM EFFORTS IN AFRICA

Faced with an increase in Islamist terrorist activities across the continent and cognizant of the threat this may pose in the long term to Western interests, the international community, led by the United States, has put in place a counterterrorism strategy for Africa. The United States has continued to support multilateral efforts in Somalia via the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) while also building capacity through training and weapons transfers to governments in West and North Africa.

In 2005, shortly after the 9/11 attacks and before the rise of Al-Shabaab, AQIM, and Boko Haram, the United States funded a Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP). This initiative aimed at improving regional collaboration between militaries in North and West Africa to jointly combat terrorism. It prioritized border security—which as mentioned previously has been a bottomless pit—strengthened the rule of law, monitored terrorist movements and finance (through the counterterrorism finance program), and took on the ambitious task of deterring the local community from supporting violent extremism. A 2014 report published by the Department of State recognized that the TSCTP had experienced setbacks "caused by a restive political climate, violent extremism, ethnic rebellions, and extra-constitutional actions that have interrupted work and progress with select partner countries."[51] A similar partnership was created in 2009 in East Africa. Known as the Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism (PREACT), it includes Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, Comoros, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Sudan, and Sudan and is built with the same goals as the TSCTP. Through PREACT, members have held joint training exercises and adapted their prosecutorial capacity to address terrorism cases in the region.

The United States set up a military command center for Africa, AFRICOM, operated by the Department of Defense. Although its 2,000 assigned personnel are based primarily in Stuttgart, Germany, AFRICOM also has a military presence in Djibouti at Camp Lemonnier. The command force played a "supporting role" in Liberia by assisting U.S. efforts to mentor and advise the Liberian Armed Forces. It also provides assistance to African states engaged against the Lord's Resistance Army and led the air strikes against Gadhafi's forces in Libya in 2011. By supporting stabilization missions in Mali and training the security forces in Libya, AFRICOM has contributed to multinational initiatives to combat terrorism, in line with U.S. interests on the continent.

The United States also works with individual partners in Africa to neutralize the terrorism threat. Specifically, the Department of Defense has provided equipment and specialized training to select armies. In Somalia, the Department of State has invested $170 million to recruit and train forces to counter Al-Shabaab and at least half a billion dollars since 2007 in equipment and logistical support to AMISOM. The United States also brokers and oversees joint military exercises such as the Flintlock exercise

hosted by Niger in 2014 that brought together troops from 18 countries including 8 African nations. Focus is also put on the rule of law to enhance awareness of and respect for human rights as community support and trust in the security forces are crucial for any counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategy. Building community resilience is a priority in the U.S. counterterrorism program in Africa.

The European Union has contributed to the GWoT. Cooperation with many African states has been difficult, however, as countries such as Algeria and Morocco prefer to work through bilateral partnerships with their former colonizers and geographically proximate countries.[52] Nonetheless, the European Union continues to prioritize aid: Nigeria remains the biggest recipient in sub-Saharan Africa with 荤670 million between 2008 and 2013.[53] In addition, the EU Foreign Affairs Council pledged in 2015 to "engage more with third countries on security issues and counter-terrorism, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa and in the Sahel" by establishing

> security and counter-terrorism dialogues, counter-terrorism action plans, counter-terrorism workshops, deploying security/counter-terrorism experts in EU delegations, new bilateral capacity building projects, strategic communication, projecting JHA [Justice and Home Affairs] agencies and tools in the MENA [Middle East North Africa] countries and an Euromed ministerial meeting on foreign terrorist fighters.[54]

According to a 2015 report by the Council of the European Union, progress was made on capacity-building projects, particularly in the area of crisis management. Furthermore, the European Union has held security workshops and improved collaboration with select countries in North Africa. Finally, a project by the European Policy College was recently approved to conduct tailor-made police training for countries affected by radical violence in the Middle East and North Africa. Overall, the European Union continues to be engaged in the global counterterrorism effort, although its impact has been limited by a preference for bilateral relations and a limited budget. Although Islamist terrorism in Africa arguably remains a bigger threat to EU countries than to the United States, a global response to jihadism continues to rely heavily on U.S. funds and political assistance.

The AU has also played its part in the so-called war on terror. The AU adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in 1999, although enforcement powers of the institution remain weak.

Conclusion

Boko Haram's strike capability and impact on Nigeria have decreased significantly since I began writing this book. The Nigerian Army has successfully pushed the militants out of the cities and villages they previously held, leaving them to dwindle and reinvent themselves in the harsh environments of the Mandara Mountains and Sambisa Forest. The victims of the insurgency, however, remain scattered across the country, languishing in refugee camps with no home to which to return. The cost of this insurgency has been largely shouldered by the people in the northeast of Nigeria, further dividing the country. Meanwhile, Buhari's presidency continues to face challenges from dropping global oil prices, a pervasive culture of corruption, and rumblings among former Niger Delta militants, not to mention a resurgence of national sentiment among supporters for a secessionist Biafra. Undoubtedly there is still much to do.

NEBULOUS NARRATIVES

As mentioned in the introduction, any research on Boko Haram takes place within a gray zone. There are no embedded journalists as far as I know among the insurgents. Many people have claimed privileged access, including select journalists, academics, and even international negotiators. Few, however, have produced any real evidence supporting their claims of having spoken to the leaders of Boko Haram. Indeed there seems to be much competition in the media to appropriate the discourse on the insurgency and make gratuitous sweeping claims. Who are Boko Haram's

leaders today? How factionalized is the sect? Is Shekau dead or alive? How close are the ties between the Nigerians and the Islamic State/ISIS, all the way up in Syria? What role, if any, do politicians play in perpetuating the crisis and where has the funding for this group come from? With so many stories and a dearth of hard evidence, these questions, for the time being, remain unanswered.

This book has attempted to regroup the competing narratives that dominate Nigeria and international politics. Some of the claims appear contradictory, others are downright absurd, but most are sourced from credible individuals who have been closely observing the symptoms of the insurgency and have an intimate knowledge of Nigeria. This has helped bring some clarity to our account. I have tried not to make too many assumptions but ground my analysis on the existing evidence and prevalent narratives. It is perhaps easier to compute the impact of this insurgency on the social and political fabric of the country. A focus on the role of politicians, the military, and the international community can also reveal some of the failures in how we have responded to the threat of Boko Haram. It may also provide some "lessons learned" for the next Islamist insurgency, in Nigeria or elsewhere.

LESSONS LEARNED

Boko Haram has in the past resurged from its ashes, adapting to new environments and reinventing its purpose and strategy as it encounters obstacles and opportunities. In military terms, the organization operates with a few thousand "hard" militants and a supporting crew of an additional several thousand recruits and slaves. This makes up a small army but hardly a military might to be reckoned with. Its hit-and-run strategy, use of suicide bombers, and indiscriminate violence arguably cause more terror than the actual number of casualties. This also undermines the legitimacy of the government by highlighting its inability to control the territory and secure its citizens. The group has also benefited from the confusing and scare-mongering stories typically present in the Nigerian press and the wild accusations thrown around by some unscrupulous politicians. Indeed, the hint of rumors that "Boko Haram is approaching" can provoke widespread civilian displacement, clogging up the already burdened refugee camps. Likewise, allegations of sleeper cells in Nigeria's main cities and the

incidents of suicide bombers have contributed to the sect's ongoing imprint on the national mind-set beyond the northeast.

The Nigerian, Chadian, and Cameroon armies have contributed to this confusion, boasting of their alleged victories over Boko Haram and their successful pursuit and killing of Shekau. They have even released pictures of the militant's body to the press. Each time, the leader of Boko Haram reemerged, although there has been no sign of him since February 2015. Whether he is dead or alive is probably inconsequential at this point. The militants have become so immersed in their battle and lifestyle that they are unlikely to lay down arms for any reason, including offers of amnesty, as have been discussed in the past. Shekau will simply be replaced by other leaders until the group loses its cohesion and main sources of sustenance. The cult that became an insurgency and a terrorist organization has now evolved into a gang of thieves with a thirst for plunder and little political ambition.

The militants' operations since April 2015 have been typical of a guerilla organization or rebel group, geographically limited and causing relatively fewer casualties. The Nigerian Army's confiscation of many of the small arms and vehicles Boko Haram previously used and the disruption of its supply routes have compelled the insurgents to review their strategy. To many, the military's victories come too late. Over a million people are still displaced, thousands have been killed, and an entire region has been set back by the insurgency. Nigerians and international observers have loudly criticized the army and the political elite for allowing the situation to digress to this point in the first place.

Military power alone is rarely the best solution to counter an insurgency or a terrorist group, although some casualties are inevitable when carrying out a counterinsurgency operation.[1] Insofar as the militants emerge and gain support from deep-rooted perceptions of injustice and insecurity, the state's use of force merely perpetuates this feeling of persecution and alienation. To the contrary, short- and long-term investments in the local economy, beginning with critical infrastructure, will help establish the government's presence, interest, and legitimacy in the area. A show of force without providing basic services expected from the state can have the opposite effect by marginalizing the population from their "guardians." This can therefore be a liability when operating a counterinsurgency operation where local cooperation is an asset.[2]

From a military perspective, it is evident that the Nigerian Army had neither the experience nor the vision to act effectively against Boko Haram. As Akali explains, the existing practices and military conventions cannot be replaced overnight.[3] In particular, a shift from conventional warfare to counterinsurgency requires restructuring and training that are largely dependent on budgetary limitations and leadership. The Nigerian Army was suited in the 1990s to carry out peacekeeping missions regionally, and arguably did so successfully, especially in Sierra Leone. These missions were important in boosting the country's credibility and power regionally. The perception of threats as external and prevalent use of conventional warfare resulted in a neglect of counterinsurgency training within the armed forces. As the threats shifted with the emergence of internal violent nonstate actors, the army was forced to refocus its strategy, an endeavor that is always painful in large bureaucratic institutions. Indeed, "counter-insurgencies are so difficult because insurgencies require a level of learning, adaptability and innovation, at speed, with which militaries—the bureaucratic, cultural and historically predictive institutions that they are—struggle."[4]

Since the end of 2014 and with the help of foreign advisers, the Nigerian armed forces have developed their domestic strategy and successfully pushed back the Boko Haram insurgency, albeit without defeating it entirely. The private military companies hired by Jonathan at the end of his tenure were instrumental for developing a counterinsurgency campaign and offering instruction and logistical support while boosting the morale of the army. Since 2015, British and American military personnel have also played a part in training paratrooper and ranger battalions and assisting with developing a more long-term counterinsurgency strategy.[5] One of the weaknesses identified with the foreign assistance programs, however, is the lack of trickle-down effect, with much of the training reaching the upper cadres of the military and focusing on the infantry with little to no impact felt by the lower-ranking officers and soldiers.[6]

Furthermore, the international commitment to the counterinsurgency by way of training and intelligence sharing came too late, allowing for Boko Haram to grow into a full-scale insurgency. It is difficult to calculate at which point the international community should become involved in any local insurgency. But to a certain extent it is the negligence and delay in

reacting to the establishment of a terrorist state in Mali in 2012 that enabled the knowledge sharing and alliance building between the different Islamist groups, allowing them to develop into serious regional threats. A similar scenario is currently being played out today in Syria and Libya. While the world argues about how to deal with the rise of ISIS/Islamic State in Syria, Libya has become the playground for the next generation of Islamist terrorists, whose ambitions are both local and regional. Unlike Boko Haram, these groups aspire to a larger cross-national agenda. From a Western perspective, we have still not learnt how to foresee, forestall, and manage the threat of Islamist radicalization in Africa and the Middle East. With such close proximity to Europe's borders and the ease of traveling across continents today, how can we afford to ignore them or fail to deal with them?

FINAL WORDS

I have argued from the onset that Boko Haram is a Nigerian problem. The insurgency emerged out of a failed governance policy in the northeast that is rooted in decades of socioeconomic frustrations and political discontent. The Nigerian government under Goodluck Jonathan failed to take this threat seriously, and the army's brute force strategy only exacerbated the problem.

Local religious tensions have also been exacerbated by environmental degradation and competition for resources and power. Modernity and the infiltration of new ideas are often threatening to groups of people who find themselves stuck between two worlds, desperately searching for their bearings to maintain a sense of identity.[7] This, along with the dearth of economic opportunity and educational outreach, has exacerbated the situation. Unable to position themselves in a new Nigeria whose citizens down south appear increasingly foreign and aloof, the marginalized youth in the regions around Maiduguri have resorted to desperate measures to find meaning in their lives.

To a certain extent, the story of the emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria is very similar to that of other Islamist groups around the world. Unable to cope with the changes of modernity and left behind by the accelerated economic and cultural changes occurring around them, an increasing proportion of the population, and especially youths, have become easy

pickings for radical groups. While Boko Haram may remain a Nigerian problem, understanding the dynamics of the insurgency can help can inform other policy makers on how to respond to the growing threat of Islamist radicalization.

This does not mean, however, that Boko Haram is part of a global Islamist threat, as it remains largely rooted in the Lake Chad region. Boko Haram is unlikely to recruit foreign fighters due to the language and geographical obstacles that will inevitably deter outsiders. Its agenda is unclear, and while it was briefly territorial, it appears more culturally and locally driven, making it a poor ally for ISIS/Islamic State and any other foreign Islamist organization.

Boko Haram will not disappear in the near future. Even if it is defeated, the roots of Islamist radicalization will continue to flourish, feeding off the frustrations of a population that feels outdone by its politicians and fellow citizens. Addressing problems such as inequality and economic opportunity will help deter radicals from becoming insurgents by offering them viable alternatives. A focus on displacing the supply chains by clamping down on weapons smuggling and controlling borders can provide ongoing oversight and controls over regions identified as "risky." Investment in critical infrastructure such as roads and training security officials to maintain good relations with locals will further assist in controlling the threat of an insurgency.

There will always be groups of radicals ready to pick up arms, especially in a country as diverse, divided, and complex as Nigeria. It is important therefore to remain attentive to these dynamics and for governments to react promptly to avoid such movements from gaining momentum. Rather than adopting scare-mongering tactics, such as portraying every local Islamist insurgency as part of the "war on terror," the international community should seek to understand and analyze the local dynamics that have led to the rise of a militarized group. Not all violent nonstate actors have attracted the attention of Western countries. Most, in fact, continue to operate without the media glare, amassing casualties and perpetrating extreme human rights violations. Would Boko Haram be of any interest to the world if it did not claim to be Islamic?

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